SHORT STORIES BY PRESENT-DAY AUTHORS

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
NEW YORK · BOSTON · CHICAGO · DALLAS
ATLANTA · SAN FRANCISCO

MACMILLAN & CO., LIMITED
LONDON · BOMBAY · CALCUTTA
MELBOURNE

THE MACMILLAN CO. OF CANADA, LTD.
TORONTO

SHORT STORIES BY PRESENT-DAY AUTHORS

EDITED BY

RAYMOND WOODBURY PENCE

PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH IN DEPAUW UNIVERSITY

New York

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1927

All rights reserved

COPYRIGHT, 1922,
BY THE MACMILLAN COMPANY.

Set up and electrotyped. Published August, 1922. Reprinted January, April, October, 1923; March, 1924; April, December, 1926; May, 1927.

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA BY
THE BERWICK & SMITH CO.

8.83
37
.2

To ROBIN

THIS BOOK IS INSCRIBED

PREFACE

Numerous collections and texts on technique have treated the matter of story-telling from the point of view of the writer. The present collection has been made with the primary idea of stimulating an interest in the short story on the part of the reader—of the reader who may never expect to write short stories but whose pleasure in reading them may be increased by a surer knowledge of what goes into their making.

The reader will find at least five distinct kinds of interest in a work of fiction—interest in plot, in character, in setting, in theme, in mood. Although all of these interests will be found in a given fiction in varying degrees, yet one of them is usually felt to be the main interest, to which all other interests are subordinate. The reader may then classify—for himself—the stories he reads on the basis of the *main* interest he finds in them, calling them stories of plot, of character, of setting, of theme, or of mood. No classification can, of course, be made arbitrarily for all readers, for no two readers will ever bring to a story quite the same attitude. But a classification that will be that of the average reader may prove helpful in representing the present-day writer of short sories at his best in plotting, in characterization, in the handling of setting, in the development of theme, and in the presentation of mood. Keeping in mind, then, that such a classification is a means and not an end, we may note that if the main interest in a story is in plot—that is, to "see how it comes out"—the story will be a story of dramatic incident, a detective story, a story of plot ingenuity, or a problem story. When the main interest is found to be in character it will be in a character as an individual or as a psychological study. If the main

interest is in setting, it will be in the local color used or in the atmosphere the author has created. If the underlying idea of the story becomes the thing of main interest, the story will be a thematic or didactic story or story of abstract idea. Sometimes the main interest will be found to be in what may be called mood, as in the love story (or story of hate or revenge), in the story of humor (or pathos or tragedy), or in the story of fantasy. For the convenience of the user of the book the stories have been grouped under these heads, with suggestive reading lists after each group. Naturally there must be much overlapping. While it is the reader of fiction for whom the collection has been primarily made, it is hoped that it may prove of value to the writer who wishes to study the methods by which present-day authors achieve their effects.

The generally accepted classics have been excluded; for the aim, without exception, has been to present stories of living writers only—incidentally, however, stories that the editor believes are worthy of a permanent place in our literature.

Another purpose of the book has been to encourage the reading of *volumes* of short stories. Consequently, only stories that have been found worthy of inclusion in a bound volume have been eligible for inclusion in the present collection; and throughout the bibliographical lists cognizance has been taken solely of short stories in volume form. If the reading public of *volumes* of short stories can be increased, publishers will be encouraged to bring out the best product of short-story writers of the present day, much of which lies buried in magazine files. For as things are at present most publishers look upon a book of short stories even by a successful and well-known author as a much greater hazard than a novel.

In order that the stories listed in the reading lists, placed after each group, may be located without trouble, a fairly comprehensive list of volumes of short stories in English—together with books on various phases of the short story—have been placed at the end of the book. Stories of especial

merit in a volume have been mentioned by title. (Italics have been used to indicate volumes and quotation marks to indicate individual stories.)

A collection of stories of this sort—made up of copyright material of great value—would have been an impossibility had it not been for the very generous support and coöperation of the authors and publishers represented, and to them I express my very sincere gratitude. Specific acknowledgment has been made in connection with each story.

I am under special obligation to Miss Fannie Hurst, Mr. John Taintor Foote, and Mr. Hugh MacNair Kahler for valuable suggestions and for their very genuine interest in the undertaking.

R. W. P.

Greencastle, Indiana
June, 1922

CONTENTS

PREFACE

STORIES OF PLOT

(a) Dramatic Incident

PAGE

THE RED MARK, John Russell 1
THE CHINK AND THE CHILD, Thomas Burke . . . 39
Reading List 52

(b) Detective and Mystery

THE DOOMDORF MYSTERY, Melville Davisson Post . . 54
Reading List 68

(c) Ingenuity and Surprise

HOW IT HAPPENED, A. Conan Doyle 69
Reading List 73

(d) Problem

A JURY OF HER PEERS, Susan Glaspell 74
Reading List 99

STORIES OF CHARACTER

(a) Individual

HUMORESQUE, Fannie Hurst 101
THE GAME OF LIFE AND DEATH, Lincoln Colcord . . 135
Reading List 160

(b) Psychological

THE BELLED BUZZARD, Irvin Cobb 162
Reading List 179

STORIES OF SETTING

(a) Local Color

THE CONVERSION OF ELVINY, Helen R. Martin . . . 180

PAGE

VLAD'S SON, Konrad Bercovici 194
Reading List 214

(b) Atmosphere

THE YELLOW CAT, Wilbur D. Steele 216
Reading List 237

STORIES OF THEME

THE BUCKPASSER, Hugh McNair Kahler 239
Reading List 274

STORIES OF MOOD

(a) Love

OPUS 43, No. 6, John Trotor Foote 275
THE LAST ROOM OF ALL, Stephen French Whitman . 288
Reading List 312

(b) Humor

THE FIGHT THAT FAILED, Octavus Roy Cohen . . . 313
"LITTLE GENTLEMAN," Booth Tarkington 349
Reading List 368

(c) Fantasy

THE NIGHT CALL, Henry van Dyke 370
THE TOLL-HOUSE, W. W. Jacobs 389
Reading List 400

NOTES 401

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL LISTS 407

History and Criticism of the Short Story
Technique of the Short Story
Volumes of Short Stories

SHORT STORIES BY PRESENT-DAY AUTHORS

SHORT STORIES BY PRESENT-DAY AUTHORS

THE RED MARK *

By John Russell

Even now nobody can tell his name, though doubtless it was a grand and a proud one. Perhaps you could find it in the files of the Bordeaux press twenty years ago, when they sentenced him to transportation for life for five proved murders. Since then it has been officially forgotten. But the man himself has lived on. He lives and he continues to develop his capabilities—as we are all expected to do here in New Caledonia.

M. de Nou, we call him. He is our only convict official. Ordinarily, you comprehend, our jailers do not admit convicts to the administration. We are citizens, if you like, in this criminal commonwealth. We are the populace of this outlaw colony at the far navel of the earth. We are artisans, workmen, domestics: we are masons, cooks, farmers: we are even landholders and concessionaires—enjoying the high privilege of forced labor, the lofty civic title of cattle in a bull-pen. It is all very philanthropic: but we have not yet risen to fill posts under the government. Except one of us. He has been raised because they could find no other, convict or free, to perform the peculiar duties of the position. That

* From *Where the Pavement Ends;* copyright, 1921, by Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. Reprinted by permission of the publishers.

is M. de Nou. We hate him. There is not a creature of us from Balade to Nouméa, from the nickel mines of Thio to the forests of Baie du Sud, that does not hate and fear him as some other people hate and fear sin. The very Canaques flee at the whisper of his coming and invoke their own dark gods against this white demon in the flesh. Eight thousand felons bear the thought of him in daily bitterness. We have been thieves, assassins, poisoners: we have been set aside in a sort of infected rubbishbox, the sweepings of the prisons: but the last of us, perishing from thirst, would turn back a cup that had been polluted by the touch of M. de Nou. When M. de Nou comes to die the devil will have to dig a deeper pit. Hell is too good for M. de Nou.

He is the executioner. He operates the guillotine. Not for any pay or profit nor for the rank it gives him: but from choice. It is his capability! It is the thing he likes to do.

Me, I am even with him. I am even with him against all time. Should it be my fate to pass through his hands some day, should he stand to perform his last dreadful offices for me, still am I even with him. I would grin from under the slide itself and I would say to him—"M. de Nou, I am even with you!" But I would not tell him how. I would turn silent from those haunted yellow eyes, half-understanding and ravening at me, and I would die content to leave him to his damnation. No, I would not tell! . . . Only I am telling you, truly, so that perhaps this tale may reach some of our friends who have escaped from New Caledonia into the world again. They will remember, and they will rejoice to hear how I evened the score on M. de Nou. Listen:

It was soon after my release from the Collective—when I was considered to be properly chastened by residence in the cells—that I had the ill-luck to meet this individual.

You can see for yourself I was never built for rude labor. But I have a certain deftness of my fingers and perhaps also —well, a certain polish—what? . . . Monsieur agrees? Too kind! Your servant, Monsieur. . . . Anyway, it was quite

natural I should find employment with Maître Sergeo, he who keeps the barber shop in the Rue des Fleurs.

Maître Sergeo is a worthy man, a libéré, which means he was formerly a life convict himself, you understand, though since restored to certain rights within the colony limits. Requiring an assistant at his lathery trade he applied to the penitentiary on Ile de Nou.

"Here is a brisk fellow," said the sub-commandant, leading me out like a horse at a fair. "Number 7897. Docile and clever. Condemned for eight years. Having served his Collective with a clear record. If you are ever dull about your place he will sing you the latest operas. He has all the polite accomplishments."

"A duke in trouble," suggested Maître Sergeo, regarding me with his sober twinkle, "What romance! . . . Perhaps he is the Red Mark himself!"

Strange he should have said that. Strange, too, that I should have heard the term then and there for the first time in my life. Afterwards I found it common enough, a kind of by-word among people who affect to share the inner mysteries of police and crime. And later still I had good reason to remember it.

Meanwhile the sub-commandant was encouraging no unofficial illusions on my account.

"I said nothing about a duke," he returned. "But this is a superior type. He has been a student in his day and even has taken prizes."

"I hope he has not the habit of taking them from the till," said Maître Sergeo, like a prudent patron. "What was his little affair?"

The sub-commandant consulted my ticket.

"An argument with a knife, it appears. A favorable case. Only his enemy was so ill-conditioned as to die."

"I shall employ him," decided Maître Sergeo. "A man who is handy with a knife should also qualify with a razor."

That is how I came, as Bibi-Ri always said, to be scraping

throats instead of cutting them. Myself, I considered the jest rather poor taste and Bibi-Ri a good deal of a chattering monkey. But what would you? Nobody could be angry with that mad fellow. He was privileged.

Also, as it happened, Bibi-Ri himself was my single client on this particular afternoon of which I speak. I recall it with an authentic clearness: one of those days made in paradise for a reproach upon us poor wretches in purgatory: the air sweet and mellow, spiced with tropic blossoms: the sky a blue ravishment: the sunlight tawny in the street outside as if seen through a glass of rich wine.

It was very quiet and peaceful. From the Place des Cocotiers not far away one heard the band discoursing. Those convict musicians were playing *Perle d'Italie,* as I bring to mind: a faded but graceful melody. One could be almost happy at moments like this, forgetting the shameful canvas uniform and the mockery of one's freedom on a leash. I even hummed the tune as I listened and kept the measure with stropping my blade.

I waited for Bibi-Ri. By an amiable conceit he never failed each day to get his chin new razored—though in truth it resembled nothing so much as a small onion: as I often told him.

"That is no reason why you should peel it, sacred farceur!" he would sputter. "Please to notice I have only the one skin to my face!"

But this day he was late. I missed the merry rascal. His hour went by and still he did not come. And then, of a sudden, I spied him.

He was passing among the market stalls on the opposite pave: unmistakable, his quick, spare figure in the jacket tight-buttoned to the chin as he always wore it and the convict's straw hat pulled low on his brow. Bibi-Ri in fact. But he never even glanced to my side. At the pace of a rent collector he hurried by and disappeared. . . . This is singular, I thought. What game has he started now?

Presently he came hurrying back again, and this trip I discovered he was following a girl. But yes! A market girl. Only a slip of a thing—I could not see her well—a dainty piece she seemed, supple as a kitten, who threaded her way with a basket on her arm. I caught a flash of bare ankle white as milk, the sheen of her hair, smooth like a raven's wing: and she was gone, with Bibi-Ri at her skirts.

Three times I saw them so, through the drifting chaffering throng.

"The rogue!" I murmured. "He has found a better amusement than getting himself flayed by me. Evidently!"

At the very word came a swift clatter of sandals and who should burst into the shop upon me but that same Bibi-Ri. I had a finger lifted to accuse him, but I stopped at sight of his face.

"Dumail!" he cried. "Hide me!"

My faith, he took one's breath away.

"Hide me and say nothing!" he implored.

Well, then I thought he was simply up to some of his jokes again. You understand there is no actual hiding in a penal settlement, where we all live in the eye of the police. Nevertheless I obeyed, planted him in my chair, flung a cloth about his neck and slapped on a great mask of lather.

I had him well settled under the razor when a shadow edged across the doorway. Glancing over his shoulder, Bibi-Ri made a jump to rise.

"Animal!" I protested. "Will you take care!"

But I saw him staring with a strange fear.

Just outside by the threshold stood a man, an amazingly tall man, looking in at us. The sunlight descended on him there like the flood of a proscenium and he himself might have seemed a player in some stage burlesque. Yes, one might have smiled at first glimpse of him: a travesty of fashion in his long black redingote and varnished high hat of ancient form which added the touch of caricature to his height. One might have smiled, I say . . . but the smile

would have frozen next instant as a ripple freezes on a street puddle.

His face was a moist and shining white, the white of a corpse under the icy spray of the Morgue. He was old, of reverend years, though still straight and strong as a poplar. And with that mouth of painted passion and a great nose curved like a saber and the glittering tiger eyes in the skull of him—I leave you to imagine any one more appalling.

Close behind him came another: a bandy-legged, squat fellow like a little black spider, in attendance.

Even then, before knowing, I shrank from them both. They resembled the bizarre and evil figures of the Guignol that used to haunt my dreams in childhood. Truly. And the tall one was Polichinelle, the image of a gratuitous and uncomprehended wickedness.

"Well done, hireling," he observed, in the voice of a crow. "Well done indeed! You are something of a craftsman too. A good beginning. And a good subject, who is ripe to have the head shaved from his shoulders, I should think. . . . Pray continue," he said. "Cut again and cut deeper!"

Thereupon I became aware he was addressing me, and with the most pointed, the most sinister interest: and next I found myself still holding the razor over Bibi-Ri's cheek where he had taken an ugly gash. That big devil smiled and chuckled in intimate fashion at my red blade. His eyes shone like topaz. Stupidly I followed their gaze. When I looked up again . . . the two outside were gone.

"Name of God!" I cried. "Who are those?"

Bibi-Ri had fallen back in his chair.

"The vultures!"

Well, I understood fast enough that I had made acquaintance of the terrible M. de Nou. The other would be his aide and familiar, a former Polish anarchist—I had heard—whom even the society of convicts rejected and who bore the fit name: Bombiste. These were the dreaded servants of the

guillotine. But now they had passed I was bold as the best: I could mock myself.

"Imbeciles!" I laughed. "To be scared by an old bogey like that! The executioner? So be it. We can curse him and let him go. . . . Though in truth he has a sickly notion of an afternoon call, the lascar!. . . Sit still while I plaster that sliced onion of yours."

But something had come upon Bibi-Ri. For once he gave me back no jest.

"The monster has marked me down! You heard him? It is a warning!" At that he started up, all streaky with soap and blood as he was, and must rush away on some errand. And then remembering it would be impossible to run the police limits of Noumea before dark, collapsed again. "I am lost!"

Figure my amazement.

"But how?" I demanded. "Does your blessed executioner have power to pick his own victims? . . . Does he go about cropping heads, for example, like a man in a flower garden? What can he make to you? . . . Unless perhaps he has come between you and that fair fortune I saw you pursuing so ardently a moment ago."

The way his jaw dropped! As if I had touched the very spring of his destiny.

Now you can guess that I knew perhaps a little—no matter how little—of lawlessness and violence and secret intrigue persisting within this model criminal laboratory of ours. Do you change vice to virtue by transporting it half a world away and bottling it up? A disturbing question. At least if you expect your convicts to work, to aspire, even to marry and to multiply like free men, you must expect them also to covet, to scheme, to quarrel and to sin—again like free men. These facts I had noted without exploring too deeply, you comprehend. But Bibi-Ri was the last I should have credited with a share in their darker meaning.

Only picture this client as I had found him. A nimble rogue: a kind of licensed pest, with a droll face resembling those rubber toys that wink and grimace between your fingers. True, he had been shipped with the worst of us. But what of that? One knows these gentlemen the Parisian police: how they cry a wolf and then go out and nab some stray puppy in the street. Bibi-Ri! One wondered how he had ever earned his sentence.

And yet—and yet there was certainly something about the fellow. In his eyes were depths. Something fateful and despairing. Something, in view of his accustomed mad humor, to make me pitiful and uneasy.

"Look here, my zig," I said. "I have seen too much and not enough. What have you done? I spy a gay mystery that makes a comedian like you play such a part."

"Perhaps it is the other part I have to play," he returned, with a gleam of his proper spirit. "Perhaps I am playing it at the last gasp of fright—my poor knees clapping like castanets. . . .

"Dumail," he said, "put it this way: Suppose you were within three counted weeks of your final release from this hell of an island. Your little red ticket in hand and the actual ship in harbor that presently should bear you home. Within sight of heaven—you understand. Able to taste it. Able to count the days still left you like so many bars on a red-hot gridiron still to be crossed. Three little weeks, Dumail! . . . And then your sacred luck offered to trip you up and cheat you again. . . . Rigolo—what?"

"Very rigolo," I agreed, luring him. "But it seems to me you are borrowing your effects from the martyrdom of the holy St. Laurent."

"Oh, I have a stranger impersonation than that in my repertoire," he flashed. "Conceive, if you can, that I am also supposed to fill the rôle of a seigneur—and a very noble gentleman, too—in disguise!"

Perched there on the chair with a dirty towel about his

neck, his hair in a wisp, smeared like a clown and preaching his gentility, he made a figure completely comic—should I say?—or tragic. Anyway I gave a gesture of derision that stung him past endurance.

"Dumail——" he broke out. "You laugh? Dumail, will you believe this? There is awaiting me back home at the present moment a heritage of millions. Of millions, I swear to you! Not the treasure of an opium dream, Dumail, but a place ready established among the great and the fortunate. For me: Number Matricule 2232! Life is a gondola, do you see? Luxury, leisure, rank. Beauty. Women. Happiness! Everything a poor lost devil could crave!"

Well, you know, it was a bit too much for me.

"Comedian!" I applauded. "Ah-ah—comedian!"

A sort of fury took him. All else forgotten, he jerked loose the collar of his jacket: made to spread it wide—checked himself and instead drew out from his breast an object for my inspection.

I had view of a miniature: one of those cherubic heads on ivory that relate to the model, perhaps, as a promise relates to a fact in this naughty world. Nevertheless I could trace a sort of semblance to that roguish front as it might have seemed in childhood—all ringlets and innocence, cerulean eye and carmine cheek—the whole encircled by a double row of pearls: Bibi-Ri himself.

"My title deed."

I was impressed. Impossible to deny a richness in this miniature. And while the likeness was thin the pearls were indubitable. Still——

"Blagueur!" I murmured. "Where did you snaffle it?"

Gloomily he regarded me. "You are like the others. Always while I was kicking about the gutters or the jail it was that way. No one would listen. Another of Bibi-Ri's jokes! And I lacked any clew to this trinket: my single poor inheritance. . . . But now—look! These queer signs on the re-

verse. They have been deciphered. Oh, an unbelievable stroke of chance! Of course I have much to learn. The name of the family. My own true name itself. But at least I am in the way of proof and this time I was going to win! . . . A famished man—a man famished since his birth, Dumail—is set before a boundless feast. Does he joke about that?"

"Perhaps not," I admitted. "Go on."

"But I am showing you what Life means to me!"

"And M. de Nou—?" I reminded him.

He shuddered: his head dropped upon his breast.

"M. de Nou—is Death!"

Well, you know, this was all very thrilling for emotion, but as a statement it left something to be desired.

"Answer me," I commanded. "Have you killed any one?"

"No!"

"Is there another sentence hanging over you? Have you some stain on your prison record?"

"None."

"Whom have you wronged?"

"Nobody."

"Then sacred pig! It is only a folly of nerves after all! Just because you expect to cash your millions and swim in champagne at last? . . . Bear up under it, my boy. Stiffen your lip! Faith, you might be a missing dauphin or even the Red Mark himself—as people say—and still you could meet your luck with a little courage!"

Like a jack on wires Bibi-Ri sprang to his feet.

"True!" he laughed, shrill. "You are right, Dumail. You are the friend in need! . . . Where is that blessed mop, to dry my face at least. So! I'm off! . . . But to-night—what? I owe you something, Dumail: you and your curiosity! To-night you shall come behind the scenes. If you dare. Understood?" He wheeled at the step; his eyes held their old twinkling deviltry. "I was a thief before I was ever a gentleman," he said, with his wried grin, "and I can still

play that farce to its end—get through and done with it and pull out once for all! . . . You shall see for yourself!"

Thereupon he left me to the haze of bewilderment in which I lived for the rest of the day.

Now you can imagine without much telling that we have ways—we convicts assigned here and there on service—to conduct our own underground affairs in despite authority. Unnecessary to explain these little evasions. Enough to say my client was as good as his word that evening. Enough to say that under misty stars, while the military of the watch were safely watching, Bibi-Ri crept out of town by forbidden paths: and that I crept along with him.

Inland from Nouméa for a wide district is all one checkerboard of gardens and small estates where libérés and convict proprietors—the aristocrats of our settlement—enjoy their snug retreat. Not being a reformed bandit myself, skilled in agriculture and piety, I was strange to this countryside. But Bibi-Ri had the key. I could only tag at his heels through blind plantations and admire his silence and his speed. Truly, as he said, he was taking me behind the scenes: until at last, in a grove of flamboyants that wrapped the night with darker webbing, he set hand to a door.

For all I knew it could have opened on the Pit itself: but a shaft of light guided me stumbling into a stone-flagged kitchen, low and dim and smoky in fact as some lesser inferno.

By the hearth a woman turned from tending the kettle to overlook us steadily. She was alone, but my faith! she had no need to fear. Figure to yourself this massive sibyl with a face planned on a mason's square, deep-chiselled and brooding in the flush of firelight. She was like that. Yes, a sibyl in her cave, to whom Bibi-Ri entered gingerly as a cat.

"I am here, Mother Carron," he said.

Then for sure and for the first time I saw where we stood. Mother Carron! In Nouméa—through all the obscure complex of convict life—no name bore more significance: or less,

in the official sense. For she had no number. Consider what that means to a community of jailbirds. The finger of the law had never touched her. Consider how singular in a country of keepers and felons!

She was a free colonist. Her husband, a distinguished housebreaker, had been transported some years before. Whereupon she had had the hardihood—sufficient if you like!—to immigrate, to claim a concession and to have that same husband assigned her as a convict laborer.

Since then she had wielded a curious power. Her size, her tongue, her knowledge of crime and criminals and her contempt of them all—these made her formidable. But also it was whispered that queer things went on at her plantation under the flamboyant trees: a famous rendezvous where no prying agent ever found a shred of evidence—against her or any one else. Successful escapes had been decided there, they said. And disputes of convict factions that troubled no other court, and even politics of the underworld at home, referred to certain great ones among us. Our inner conclave of transportés—so dread and secret that to be identified a member brings solitary confinement in the black cells—had assembled there to seek her counsel. Had demurred to it and been routed with her broom whisking about their ears, if rumor spoke true. For she was a lady of weighty ways.

Me, I was glad to slip aside unchallenged. I had no desire to linger between that dame and the purpose, whatever it might be, that dwelt in the fixity of her frown. As a spectator I blotted myself in the shadows, to attend the next act of this hidden and somber drama.

"Monsieur," she began, with an affectation wholly foreign to her rough voice, "I have the felicity to inform you that our beloved Zelie is home from Fonwhary again."

"I knew it," murmured Bibi-Ri.

"She resides at present under this poor roof."

He cast a nervous glance toward the stairway. "I knew that," he said.

"Ah? You know so much? After staying away so long? . . . We began to doubt it."

She came to plant herself before him, and the effect of her politeness was like a bludgeon.

"In that case be kind enough to sit, Monsieur Bibi-Ri. Dear little Monsieur Bibi-Ri: we have missed you! Be seated. You bring your pockets full of news, it seems."

But it seemed on the other hand, not so. I saw my companion brace himself. Evidently this was his stage-play: the ordeal he had now to meet.

"You must excuse me, Madame. I cannot remain and I have no news. . . . Except that I drop this business on the spot. Like a live coal, Madame!"

His whimsy might have disarmed any other.

"I have done my best with Zelie. Sad! Somehow she fails to perceive any longer my true charm. . . . You had sent me mysterious word, Madame, of some danger to which you said she was drifting. Well—seeing her in the public market to-day I sought to question her: at the least to give her brotherly advice. Madame—she repulsed me. Like that! Would neither talk nor listen. Said we were watched. Said it was not safe.

"Sapristi! . . . You can believe I was ready to quit then and there! But presently I found a better reason—if I needed one, Madame. For casting about, perplexed as I was, of a sudden I recognized—can you guess? Why the man! The individual you expected to send me against, I imagine. From whom I am supposed to guard her, perhaps! I saw him.

"After that: enough and many thanks!" he laughed, with a catch in his throat. "No place for Bibi! Finished. Rien ne va plus! . . . For who am I to chase any maid so unwilling? And at the same time who am I and what should I be doing—in my present station, Madame—to cross the little harmless fancies of such a personage? . . . It was M. de Nou!" he cried.

Still she made no move.

"And so—Bibi-Ri retires," he concluded, unsteadily, edging for his exit. "I withdraw! You can find someone better fitted. My time is up. My ship sails soon. I will not need to come again, I think. In parting——"

"What!" It was like the break of a banking storm. "What did you sing me there? 'Not come again?' Forty devils! Do you know if you hadn't come to-night in answer to my message I would have had you haled by the leg? . . . Why you two sous' worth! You think to employ your sneaking pickpocket tricks on me? To decamp with the prize I taught you to use: and pay nothing for it?"

There was incredulity in her wrath: the measure of her rude mastery.

"Before God! Where did you get the courage to try that?" she marvelled. "As if I had not trouble enough already with the other stubborn brat herself. And now you! . . . Have you altogether forgotten that I betrothed you myself to my niece—my own dead sister's child—when she came visiting from the church school at Fonwhary some weeks ago?"

"You said it was so," admitted Bibi-Ri, squirming.

"Good! Then you can wager it was so, my boy. . . . And at that time did you or did you not strike a solemn bargain with me?"

He made no denial.

"You wept—sacred pipe! You called every saint to witness your gratitude. Anything I wanted! Zelie? Of course. You would always be the defense of that precious infant against the taint and the curse of Nouméa!"

He shrugged.

"You swore by your own hope of salvation to save her—to pluck this pure flower from the dung-hill and marry her the very hour of your release. Your bridal trip should carry her away to France. . . . Are these your offers?"

"I offered to," he retorted. "But Zelie refused even then—you know she did! And so she has since."

"Fichtre! You and your offers! Tell me—from the day you discovered your heritage have you ever been back to persuade her?"

He avoided that stern eye.

"There it is, you see!" She gave an eloquent gesture. "As for her—leave her to me. She is only a stiff-necked little idiot who knows nothing. You should have made up her mind for her. You! I picked you for that: and you were willing enough before. But straightway: instead: what did you do? . . . Why you began to swell up over notions of your coming greatness! That is what happened to you. Shrimp! Can't I read your soul?

"Suddenly you found yourself to be a somebody! Ambition grew in you like a mushroom. Not good enough—Zelie, of New Caledonia! She might handicap you in your fine career. You beheld a glorious future that had no place for her. But who opened that prospect? Cré tonnerre! Who sold it you? Who deciphered the miniature? Who but I?

"And now at last, when the girl falls in deadly peril—as much through pique as through mere blindness, be sure of it! —when I call you to redeem your pledge and protect her: you quit! You 'withdraw!' You decide to use your new airs and graces and pull your feet out of the wet! Because you prefer the excuse of a coward to that of a traitor—Monsieur—is that it?"

Her fist hit the table like a sledge.

"Faineant! . . . Unless you brand yourself as shamefully as any Red Mark that ever lived. . . . Sit down!"

He had been sidling, bit by bit: he had taken himself almost to the door-sill: but under that tone of thunder—under that sudden amazing and cryptic jibe—he started, he faltered, he obeyed. She bulked above him and it was about this time I began truly to be sorry for my harlequin friend.

It was plain enough by this time, you understand, that I was witnessing one of those obscure human tangles which ravel themselves in the depths of a penal society. Possible

nowhere else, I suppose. Yet its threads were the passions and its center was the heart: and poor Bibi-Ri no poorer hero than you or I or any of us might prove. At this point he had fallen back to his defense: sullen, awed, but also intently curious of her. How she expected to force him to her design I could not guess. But breathlessly I watched while she wove about him and about.

Back by the hearth she stood meditative for a space in silence: a dim presence in that room where the kettle hissed and gave off its vapors—of brewing fates, perhaps.

"Give me a man if he be a bad one. A man who can stand to his game two days on end—how do they put it: those savants?—'developing his capabilities.' Ah! Not like these others. Waffles! Half-baked. Mixed with small impulses good and evil. Let him be saint or devil, so he develop that capability. Let me see him anyway stand to it! . . . As I have seen a few:

"I remember many years ago at the prison of Mazas," she went on, as if in casual retrospect, "they kept a certain famous captive. Myself, I was never a resident there—no thanks!—I prefer the comforts of honesty. But my one sister, now dead, she was beginning her own silly career about then. She lacked the brains to steer it safe. So for a time she inhabited that same institution. And one day as we met by the visitors' room she pinched my arm to look.

" 'There goes the wickedest man in France,' she said.

"Down the courtyard came a dozen of gendarmes parading a prisoner. That was a devil—if you like! That was a type—for example. Tall and fierce and unbeaten, with the eyes of a tiger. Once to see him was never to forget him again. . . . While he was still newly caught they had always to guard him that way lest he slay some one with his manacled fists.

"He belonged to the very oldest stock of the South, it appeared: the old high noblesse. And was he rich? And proud? You can believe it. But also he was a great criminal

such as walks the earth every while or so to remind us after all how short a journey it is to hell. A true devil. My sister knew him. She had been a servant in the household. She knew his whole story—which soon was hushed, I can tell you: a scandal too black to publish."

Her voice rose a rumbling note under the vault.

"Messieurs, never mind the rest of the tale at present. But inquire only this: Did they slay him? Did they give him his deserts? . . . Oh, naturally not—else where is the use of Nouméa! We must suppose those savants were glad of the specimen. 'The wickedest man'—do you see? And as for him: he was strong. And cunning to seize his opportunities. And above all true to his own devilment. So he won reprieve, Messieurs. They preserved him. They shipped him out to this tropic forcing house of ours—to let him keep on developing! . . . And he has. He does. My faith! With the approval of the Administration. With all kinds of special privileges and gratifications!"

She moved from the shadow again.

"Why do you tell me this?" demanded Bibi-Ri, hoarsely.

"For your instruction, Bibi-Ri," she returned, with her tone of intolerable significance. "To show you how one man stood to it. Admirable—eh? . . . A moment ago you spoke of his 'harmless fancies.' Well: he gluts them. He gets what he wants. A fancy of pride? Behold him in his black coat and his lofty office! A fancy for blood? From time to time he stands to spill it publicly on the scaffold! A fancy for young and innocent flesh—a solace to his old age? . . . Do you imagine he would be balked of that? Or rather are you prepared to hear how—with official permission and even the clerical benediction—how he manages to bedevil and to win the particular young girl of his choice?"

In hammer blows she planted each phrase.

"How this same man has let no grass grow under his feet in his little rivalry with yourself, Bibi-Ri!"

She spared him nothing.

"How, having desired your Zelie without 'ifs' or 'buts' he found means to make his purpose good, Bibi-Ri!"

He could only gape at her.

"How he followed her to Fonwhary: how he followed her back: how he missed no trick of persuading and persisting: how he finally forced her consent like any true lover in this very house this morning!"

"It is not possible!" gasped Bibi-Ri.

"Eh? It is true of true!" she trumpeted. "Name of God —where do you think you are? This is Nouméa! . . . Let her pass for a fool—half-mad with bitterness and chagrin though she be—and still you must admit it is not every poor orphan who gets such a chance hereabouts. What? To occupy a little manor outside the prison grounds. To enjoy the little benefits of official standing. To wear the pretty trifles of jewelry, the rings and keepsakes and lockets, that fall to the master's share every time he strikes off a lucky head! . . . Dieu! . . . Can you picture to yourself the home-coming at that menage after a day's honest labor? To be sure, she might require him first to wash his hands for fear of spoiling her new gown! But these stains of the trade—what do they matter? And so your Zelie, your sweet pigeon, your simple Caledonienne who was all too simple for you—whom you cast aside with 'brotherly advice' —she chooses to embrace that ghoul, that hell-hound, that old satyr of all the infamies. . . . To-morrow she weds with M. de Nou!"

In blind distress he stumbled to his feet and shied from her with hands outspread to fend away the monstrous thing. But skillfully she headed him around to the foot of the stairs and brought him face to face with the actual vision descending there.

"Ask her yourself!" . . .

You have seen those figures in a window of old stained glass which leap from the haze of color as if illumined of themselves. The girl who waited just above us on the step

bore that same transparent loveliness, with all the fleshly promise of my glimpse of her in the market. She wore a single belted garment of some white peasant's stuff, but nothing could have suited better in the somber light of that place, smoke-blued against smoky walls. In truth it might have seemed the subtlest coquetry to clothe such beauty in the coarsest garb. For she herself was delicate as a bud. Vital and lithe: with a close-set casque of jet hair, mouth like a crushed mulberry against satin, mutinous eyes and chin; the wild, slight, heavy-scented flower of these climes.

There she stood quite coolly: even languidly.

"Visitors?" she inquired, aware of us with impersonal gaze. "I wondered if any would stop to-night. It would be kind of them to come and wish me happiness."

Except that she spoke unsmiling and ignored Bibi-Ri, except for her deathly pallor, she seemed without the least consciousness of a terrible irony. And when my poor friend made some sound in his throat her pure brow clouded a bit: she pouted.

"Have you been making yourself tiresome again with the visitors, Maman? Now where is the good of that? I wish you would not start fretting with everybody. . . . Yes, I shall be married. Yes, I shall be married to-morrow. By special civil license and by the priest from La Foa. There! It is all settled. . . . I hope you can find something more amusing for our guests."

Incredible to see how quiet she was, how composed, how youthfully unstrained. Only when her heavy lids swept over Bibi-Ri and their glances crossed could you detect like electric charges the unacknowledged tension behind.

"Oh, for amusement," chuckled Mother Carron, with a savage humor, "Bibi-Ri is amused: right enough. Sacred stove—yes! . . . Only he says the affair is impossible."

For the first time Zelie regarded him fairly.

"I see no reason why any one should think so. Unless he

forgets—as I never do any more—that I am the daughter of convicts."

Ah, there was steel in that girl! What? The way she said it! Very simply. Without rancor, you understand. Letting it bite of itself. Without a quaver from that crisis of despair in which she must have learned to say it. In a flash I knew how the gleaming, soft, full-blooded slip of a creature had stood up against this tremendous aunt of hers. And could stand. And would! . . . And Bibi-Ri: he knew too. His babbling protest died cold on his lips.

"My convict father married my convict mother in this convict country," she went on, evenly. "I was born here. I must live and die here. I could never look to marry outside —could I? . . . They would say I was tainted. . . . For the rest—well, I have only to please myself, I believe."

And Mother Carron nodded like a grim showman.

"Eh? What do you think of that? A wise infant—eh? Could anything be more just and reasonable?"

And it was so. She was right. It was perfectly just: perfectly reasonable. There you had the stark and appalling fact. For this is Nouméa—as Mother Carron reminded us in good season. This is Nouméa—the Noah's Ark toy of penology. If you expect your convicts to pair off and to breed like free folk, you must expect their children likewise to couple as they can—or will: free folk themselves. And with whom? Where do you draw the line? What kind of a social formula have you left for the second generation, reared in an out-door jail? Our wise philanthropists who devised the experiment: I wonder if they ever thought so far ahead. They should have been interested in Zelie—the perfect product.

Meanwhile there remained my companion—Bibi-Ri. Poor Bibi-Ri. . . . Whatever had passed between him and that unhappy deluded child I could not know, you comprehend—in truth I never did know. But they must have been very close at one time: those two: before his grand ambition nipped him. He was suffering. He writhed. Nevertheless I saw

it was going to make no difference with him. . . . Not now. Not this late along. I sensed his effort. I heard him draw his breath sharp like a man who plucks the barb from the wound.

"One moment, Madame!" He avoided Zelie. In abrupt and flurried speech he addressed himself to Mother Carron. "A moment, Madame—I beg. This is mere madness. And painful. And unnecessary. . . . There is still one easy way out for her, you know—for Zelie, for me, for everybody. Still a way."

She unbent to him all at once as to a prodigal son.

"Tiens!" she cried. "You have perceived it?"

"I have remembered. I intended not to tell you; to let it come of itself. And truly—you drove it somewhat out of mind. But now——"

"At last!"

"If we can only get Zelie to listen——"

"Ha! Just look at her there!"

"It fits the need."

"She never had but one, my boy—to hear you speak out once like this: as if you meant it."

"And besides," he stammered, "it should cancel any—any obligations you might still hold against me, myself."

"Parbleu! I should hope so!"

He labored on, with a kind of desperate snuffle.

"At the end, Madame, we can always turn for aid to the Church—the patient friend of us all. . . . This afternoon—uneasy about Zelie, I confess, and thinking a decisive step would be best for every one—this very afternoon I took myself to St. Gregory's and there I saw——"

"Bibi-Ri: in a moment I shall kiss you!"

"For God's sake let me speak, Madame! . . . I saw the Directress of the Order of St. Joseph of Cluny. She heard me readily. You know—these good nuns—how they rescue any they can of the children of Nouméa. . . . Well: I arranged it. . . . To-night a travelling sister will visit you

here. By great luck she is returning home very soon. If the dispositions are favorable she has promised to take Zelie at once, to guard her and to see her safe—passage free—to France, where refuge and the consolations of religion, Madame, await her!"

In the silence that dropped you should have seen Mother Carron.

"Refuge!" she began, empurpled. "What is the fellow talking about? Conso—— . . . Look here. Do you mean a convent?"

"Of course, Madame."

"A convent! In truth? Is this all you have to offer?"

"Yes, Madame."

She flung up her arms.

"Faith of God! You dare to make me ridicule like that? Animal low of ceiling! . . . But no, I tell you, but no! It is too much. My turn now. Listen to me, both. Listen to my plan! . . . To-day I also went to St. Gregory's: do you hear? I also sought the aid of Holy Church, which never refuses in the cause of morality—Heaven be praised!—to perform a convict marriage where it can. I also obtained help. That good Father Anselm: he also promised. He also is coming here to-night! . . . And word of honor, I hope to be turned into a pepper-mill if I don't have him marry the two of you on the spot!"

One and the other, she challenged them.

"You think not; you wilful imp?" she roared. "I tell you it shall be so! . . . And you, Bibi-Ri—you grin in that sickly fashion? Wait, my gar: I'm not done with you yet! Thousand thunders!—in another minute you will be crawling at the crook of my finger. . . . Attend!"

And looming on us there, gigantic in the firelight like some ancient fury, she launched her climax.

"You recall that tale I started for your benefit? Well: there is more of it. I told you my sister knew all the story of 'the wickedest man'? Well: there was one thing she did

not know and would have given much to hook up—like many another blackmailer, then and since. . . . Note! . . . From the murderous purpose with which that fiend pursued all in his power—wife, family, associates—it appears he spared a single victim. The creature, indeed, in whom he centered his whole affection—to call it so—his hateful pride, at least. A single one he set aside. But only to be the instrument of a last defiance.

"Brought to exposure, his course run out: what do you suppose he did? Why he took measures to conceal that remaining heir of his house beyond recovery. . . . He put away that son. He lost him! Completely. In space: in the world: in the crowd and the gutter. Where none should ever find him again—as none ever did, for all the rewards and all the police.

"Such cleverness—eh? Such logic! For observe. . . . They dared pass no death sentence while there appeared any chance of extracting his secret. A vast estate was waiting on the person of that child—one of the finest fortunes in France: the heritage of a golden line. He kept it waiting. At a stroke he saved himself before the judges: he hid away the only treasure he loved: he prolonged his own evil destiny through this unknown seed of his planted somewhere in the mud!"

Her regard flamed on Bibi-Ri.

"Unknown—my little dears. Unknown ever since! . . . Though it is said Heaven itself had set its seal on that race for a warning and a symbol: though the child himself was marked from birth: was marked about the neck—so the legend goes—with a thin red line like the print of a noose or the trace of strangling fingers!"

Bibi-Ri had propped himself by the table, one hand clutching the close collar of his jacket.

"How—how could you guess. . . .!"

"Ah-ah! Now will you try to throw us over? Not so easily—eh? Now don't you think you still have need of

us? Until the depositions are made, at least? . . . Sac à papier! The very instant you showed me that old miniature and the initial it bears—I knew you, my boy! I could have read your whole fortune then: only I saved the best of it for a wedding present! And for sure, I never expected you to try a bolt. A droll of an idea—that! To run away from your chief witness? . . . Why, stupid one!" She broke off to drop him a little mocking curtsey. "Monsieur the Duke! . . . It was my own sister had the honor to be Your Grace's nurse!"

He was trembling. "Tell me the name of that family!"

"But certainly, my lad. . . . After you are married!"

"Don't torture me! Tell me the name of that man!"

"But certainly, my love. . . . It is M. de Nou!"

Strange how like a sinister refrain that title—that word—ran and recurred throughout the affair. But this time it had an impact as never before. Credit me! This time it came home to Bibi-Ri: and my little joker absolutely reeled under it.

"Eh?" cried Mother Carron. "Eh? How is your sacred ambition now? Is there any manhood to you? And what are you going to do about it?"

What indeed! She had reduced him to a rag. For this she had played upon a febrile nature, you understand: had battered it, dazzled it, wrung it of emotions: confirming his wildest beliefs: destroying his dearest illusions: tossing his hopes to the stars and smirching them in the mire with the same sweep:—that he might have no other will at the end. . . . And therein appeared the triumph of her masterful certitude. For presently raising his miserable and hunted eyes he looked at her: he looked for me in the shadow: he did not look at Zelie again—but he looked toward the door.

How easy it might have seemed, after all! Actually in his pocket he carried his release ticket, ready dated. His ship lay in harbor. His sentence expired some few days off. A step would take him into the night. He had simply to

keep safe within police limits until the hour of sailing and march himself freely on board. And then . . . he had won! You see? By this theory the world would open before him the most radiant of welcomes. By his faith he would have his life-long arrears to collect: his gorgeous dreams to realize. One must have been a felon—one must have eaten his heart in prison cells—and even in this widest and farthest of prison cells with its wall of painted horizons none the less alien and inexorable—to feel what those dreams meant to him.

Now again, as before, he had only to get himself off stage: he needed only the boldness to break once for all with the thief's part—as he himself had said: the selfishness to stand to his game—as Mother Carron put it!

And in truth what was hindering him? No actual compulsion: none he need fear. Only impalpable things. Shame. Uncertainty, timidity, regret. The pressures of personality. The qualms of a poor juggler with life: fearful of missing—fearful of not seizing it featly. . . . Cobwebs all!

What he would have done about it the good God can tell. I have asked myself often enough. But he hesitated a bit too long: that little fool of fortune with his face of a rubber puppet squeezed by fate. Next moment the cue had been taken from him, for across the pause ran a thin, keen whistle. Mother Carron spun around. And as if dispatched on that breath—through the key-hole, perhaps—there blew in suddenly among us from the back of the house somewhere a tiny, gray-faced, white-haired wraith of a man.

"Well—idiot? . . . What's up now?"

From her greeting, as from the blurred effactment of the apparition himself, one divined without trouble the person of that former redoubtable housebreaker: Carron. In a voice scarcely above the singing of the kettle he made his announcement.

"There are two coming by the road."

"Hey?" she bawled. "What two?"

"A priest and another."

Mother Carron smiled the only smile to pass upon her wintry front that night: she spread her hands before us.

"Enfin! What did I tell you? And in great good time, my word! . . . You hear that—you others? . . . Go and welcome Father Anselm, fool! And fetch out the wine, if you are able to stir your pins!"

The shadow sighed.

"It is not Father Anselm."

"Not Father Anselm? . . . Imbecile! Of course it is!"

"It is not Father Anselm."

"Who then—vaurien?"

"It is the fat priest from La Foa."

Impossible to doubt his steadfast whispering.

"La Foa?" she echoed, stricken. "You say? Not truly! . . . La Foa?"

"I saw him."

"And another? What other?"

"We think he is Bombiste."

I can swear that wretched individual never in his black past had handled a bomb with half the effect his mere nickname produced among us there.

"Bombiste! The executioner's assistant? . . . From Ile de Nou? . . . Here?"

"They are at the gate."

"Thunder of God! . . . And above all, at this time!" She caught his arm. "Delay that priest! Any way and anyhow: hold him! . . . Confess to him, if nothing else will do—Heaven knows you need it! . . . And let the other through at once. Be quick!"

She banished him like a puff of smoke and we waited in drawn suspense—we four—our eyes on the archway through which this visitant must now appear.

"What can he want?" demanded Mother Carron. "That blood-stained basket robber!"

And Zelie answered her very quietly.

"I suppose he brings me my message from M. de Nou."

You will remember in all my term at Nouméa I had seen but once before this ignoble under-servant of the guillotine. I could have preferred never to see him again. He did not improve on closer view.

He was one of those creatures somehow resembling insects: like the ciliate and noxious things that run about when you lift a damp rock. You know? . . . Very black. Very hairy, with hair overlaid in fringes curiously soft and glistening. With eyes very small, round and quick as beads. In person he was misshapen: bandy-legged: but with all that a powerful ruffian, whose long, crooked arms might have ended in nippers like a scorpion's.

There you have the fellow Bombiste, who presently slid in at the doorway and stood blinking through the light.

We regarded this type: and he us. Did I tell you he called himself a Pole? I cannot say. But certainly his speech was hardly to be comprehended. He spat something that could have passed equally for a greeting or a curse. And so far he had the advantage of us: for any reply of ours would have been only the half of that.

To do her justice Mother Carron kept a bold front to him. But she was handling here a very different sort of brute—not to be reached by that singular influence she exerted on the convict community at large: himself an outcaste among convicts: sharing the isolation of his detested master on Ile de Nou. When she demanded to know his affair——

"Official!" he snarled back, with his slit grin.

Indeed it must have been a rare errand for him: a rare jest. He affected in his manner a gratified swagger of contempt: natural enough for a man with whom the vilest felon would never willingly speak, you understand: natural enough for one whose only dealing with his fellows was to valet their shorn bodies on the scaffold and to gather their last poor trifles of property for the executioner's wage—"robbing the basket," as we say.

"What are you after?" persisted Mother Carron.

"Not you, old woman!" he retorted. "Not any of you," he added with brutal assurance as his glance shifted past Bibi-Ri and myself. "But I come to see . . . Mam'zelle here. And Mam'zelle alone!"

Well, we had had warning, to be sure. From this welter of evil portents some actual horror was due. And my faith, he wasted little time about it! He passed us over as if we had been less than nothing. He removed his ragged straw hat to twirl on his finger. He scraped low before the calm-faced girl who still waited impassive on the stairs. And then and there he delivered himself of the message he had been taught. All at once. Even glibly. With a kind of damnable sputtering eloquence.

"Mam'zelle Zelie—at your service—I bring you this word from my master: best respects and affections. He bids me say the civil ceremony will be for to-morrow, as planned. But he mistrusts your clever aunt—who might indeed try tricks to interfere. And so . . . you see . . . to-night: straightway: will be the wedding, Mam'zelle!

"The priest is here. In me behold one happy witness! For the other——" He grinned. "Perhaps Madame Carron will do." He thrust a thumb at Bibi-Ri. "Or that young buck yonder. The master himself only delays his impatience a few moments formally to arrive when all is ready. Safely escorted, you can believe, in this place of so bad a reputation—from which, moreover, he promises to remove you at once."

To see the rascal strut, and what airs he took!

"Meantime, Mam'zelle—in attending—please will you put on your best frock and prepare yourself," he concluded. "And as your wedding gift . . . the master has pleasure to send you herewith the precious chains and jewels in this box and asks you to wear them for his sake!"

Throughout this stupefying recital none of the rest of us stirred, you will conceive. And when he had done we could still only stare. A picture, if you like! Zelie, the unfortunate child: and there, distorting himself in gallant gesture,

offering tribute, that foul ambassador! The glow of fallen embers in the fire smudged him with infernal fantasy—it lent her the softest flush, making her young beauty to quicken and to kindle. As if a guilty angel should stoop from the lower step of heaven to take a bribe of hell. For she assented: make no mistake. . . . She was going to assent. He tendered her a small black box of leather: she had a hand outstretched to it—when a word dropped sheer and arresting in the silence as a pebble in a well.

It was not Mother Carron who spoke: our crafty hostess was far too burdened just then under the collapse of all her craftiness. Decidedly it was not me. Remained only Bibi-Ri. And in truth, he it was: though the fact appeared as one of those momentary incredibilities of intercourse.

"Zelie!"

Now I cannot pretend to know what lay in the mind of that young girl. Who could plumb such a depth? She had kept herself inscrutable. How she actually felt toward Bibi-Ri I had no guess. She had seen him pared like a carrot—humiliated as few could be—his little human folly and weakness exposed, his grand hopes and aspirations made sordid and slimy. Even his one effort, his scheme of shuffling her away into a convent which must have seemed the sorriest cowardice, had surprised no motion from her. But how she regarded him now was plain. In the slow lift of her head, the heavy glitter of her eyes—plain to read.

"Zelie," he said. "You can't go on with it."

"No?" she inquired. . . . "No?"

Some way or other he had taken up position between the door and the stairs. . . . Oh, not with any sort of flash heroism—understand me. I am not giving you a feuilleton of melodrama. But there he put himself and there he stayed.

Of course that brute Bombiste had bristled at the first interruption. With a sign Zelie checked him short. . . . She was ready for Bibi-Ri. She had been waiting for Bibi-Ri. One knew it. One knew this to be their real meeting, and finally one knew who was and who had been his real opponent.

Here the issue was joined. Between the dream and the girl —as you might say—here stood the Red Mark.

"You can't go on with it," he repeated in a voice, after all emotions, that had become almost matter of fact. "It is unthinkable. You will not touch those presents."

"I wonder if I won't," she answered.

"They were stolen from dead men——"

"Not so wicked as stealing heart and faith," she said.

"For this crime: worse than murder——"

"Not so bad as killing a soul given into your hand," she said.

"By a man the lowest of assassins!"

"Not so low," she said, "but that you claim his name, his blood and his fortune for your own!"

Ah, they were striking at each other's naked breasts, those two. With naked weapons. And neither of them shirked it. Not the girl, who sent back as good as she got—not Bibi-Ri, who took even that last terrible thrust.

"Such things do not happen." You would have thought he was putting a form of statement. "All else aside——" he said, "all else aside, this does not happen."

"What can you do or say to prevent?" she asked, leading him by so much.

"Anything you want of me."

"I want nothing: it would only be false."

"Anything you want me to say."

"I want to hear nothing: it would only be lies."

"Zelie," he offered, "will you marry me?"

That must have been the test, you know. In the covert, unproclaimed struggle which had brought them both to this pass, that must have been the gauge. Whatever thrill of satisfied passionate resentment she could have wished must have been hers there and then.

"Will you wed with me, Zelie?"

An exultant throb escaped her.

"Too late!" she said.

But he was beyond flinching.

"Let me be sure," he begged. "I was wrong, Zelie. I was blind and mad and heartless. I say so. But I give it up —I give up all that foolish gilded fancy of mine, for I see what true treasure it cost me. . . . Or look—petite—I give it up to you and we go seek the future together. Heaven knows if it could ever be any worth to us after—after to-night. But it's all I have. Zelie . . . take it for my wedding gift!"

She looked him up and she looked him down, long and steadily.

"Comedian!" she said. . . .

Well—it was rather hard. What? To twit that poor player at life with his poor playing. At his last and best not to believe him. At his supreme attempt to throw in his teeth that supreme mockery. Rather hard. In effect!

It left him dumb—and again across the pause, from somewhere outside, cut a shrill, thin whistle. Again came floating in among us, from nowhere at all, the spectral guardian of the gates: Carron. Again from a voice like a piping wind at a key-hole, we heard the news.

"Father Anselm has arrived. He is in the bassecour, with the other priest. Also two sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny, who came with him."

"Father Anselm!" echoed Mother Carron, dully, in a sort of groan. "So much for my plan. . . . And the sisters? . . . So much for Bibi's! We're all finely cooked, the lot of us!" But even in disaster she could keep the uses of habit. "Sacred pig, you take your own time!" she scolded. "Was that your signal?"

"Not for them," sighed Carron. "We gave no signal for them, seeing who they were. But a carriole is climbing by the road——"

In fact through the heavy tropic night and the open doorway there reached our ears as we hearkened a grind of wheels, the muffled jolting of a cart.

"Two militaires on the driver's seat," continued Carron, unhurried, unvarying. "And inside—another man: a man in a black coat. The runner who brought word is not quite sure, but he thinks——"

"Eh?"

"It is M. de Nou!"

So once more, to clinch the tragedy, there befell that phrase so often repeated: and this time like the summons of fate, this time invoking the very presence of the monster himself, soon to descend upon us. Bombiste gave an obscene chuckle. He had been wriggling and scowling these last few tense moments in a furious temper at the neglect of himself and his black box. But I think no one else in the room drew breath until Mother Carron, with a remnant of vigor, summed the whole desperate business and spread it in a sweep to Bibi-Ri and cried, as she had cried before——

"What are you going to do about it now?"

Bibi-Ri fell back three paces to the archway. He drew the door shut. He swung into place the bar. Then he walked over toward the foot of the stairs.

It had been my share, if you have followed me, to see many curious changes wrought upon my luckless friend during some few hours. It was my fortune at the end to see him himself. Simply. The proper spirit of a man rising to a situation no longer tolerable. Figure to yourself this eager little chap: high-keyed, timid, fervid: something of a buffoon, always a victim of his perceptions. Do you remember that cry of his when he spoke of his coming release. "Able to taste it," he had said. What do you suppose he must have been tasting at this crisis? Such a perceptive, whimsical poor devil! . . . But yet capable of an ultimate gesture as far above bitterness as above rage or despair.

"Why," he said, with his wry smile that I knew so well and from all his little height, "why—since I can't play any other it seems, I have one part left in my repertoire. . . . I can still play the gentleman!"

Deliberately, giving no other warning, he struck from the hand of Bombiste the black leather box—dashed it far away into the fireplace. With an inhuman scream the Pole jumped for his throat. They locked. And the rest was convulsion.

How long it took I cannot tell. Nor yet exactly how it was done. A darkness seemed to descend about them. They fought as it might have been through a gap in time and space: I watched them reeling in a dim immensity. At some point I was aware of a thundering and a hammering from the outer limits. . . . At another I had some idiotic impulse to plunge into the fray myself, to aid my friend. But one glimpse of his face, caught as a blink through the whirl of things, was quite enough to throw me back out of that.

Himself, he had no fury. I mean none of the heedlessness of a man merely berserk. While they revolved in their course together like a many-limbed polyp, the Pole ravened with a ceaseless and bestial ululation. Bibi-Ri never uttered a sound. Little aid he needed! I swear to you he was still smiling. He kept on smiling with a set and implacable and dreadful pleasantry.

And good reason he had to smile, since that was his humor. For just then by a masterly wrench of wrist over neck he had sent Bombiste's knife spinning from his grip like a red-winged dragonfly. . . . Soon afterward I heard a bone snap. . . . I had forgotten, you see, that while he might be the Red Mark he was not called Bibi-Ri for nothing. I had forgotten that while he might establish his claim to the belated title of a gentleman, for some twenty-odd years of his life he had been acquiring the recondite arts of the Parisian apache!

To say the less of it: by those lights he accomplished the job. In the manner of the voyou and the garroter. In a merciful obscurity. Between his hands. Between his fingers. With precision and dispatch. He broke that creature Bombiste the way you would break a bread-straw. Until their last smashing fall when the Pole was somehow horribly twisted downward underneath, when his clamor shut off suddenly like

a stream at the tap, when he rolled on the floor an inert bundle.

And we were back in the smoky kitchen. . . .

Voices were crying: figures shifting. The barred door seemed ready to crack under assault. One fat and snuffy priest had come chattering like a parrot. One gaunt and iron priest had gone sweeping forward to kneel by the dead and his duty. Two sad-robed sisters looked on with the placidity of canvas saints. Mother Carron was roaring. Carron himself flitted about with a lantern like a will o' the wisp whose tremulous flare shot the firelight with pallid citrine. It served at least to show the singular tableau at the foot of the stairs where Bibi-Ri had picked himself up.

A gladiator in the arena might have turned to Cæsar as he turned to the girl on her pedestal. He was stripped to the waist, his jacket in shreds, his compact torso white and gleaming. And there we could see—any one might have seen who knew and was minded—the curious scarlet line of the birthmark about his neck which had shaped his destiny for him to this very moment: the Red Mark.

"Do you believe me now?" asked Bibi-Ri.

Wide-eyed, she stood at gaze.

"Will you believe me now?" asked Bibi-Ri.

As the child in the fairy tale when the ice fell away from about her heart: so with Zelie. The steeled, unnatural restraint dropped from her. The generous, quivering pulse sprang in her veins. She groped: she swayed toward him.

"Bibi—what have you done? Your chance! . . . Fly while you can!"

"Too late," he said, in his turn.

"But the heritage—your great future! Your riches! Your happiness! Nothing counts but that! . . . Name of God, you've lost it!"

"I find this better: to have you think kindly of it once—and of me."

"What else should I think of?" And oh, the impassioned

miracle of her voice! " . . . It is your right. You should have it—you must have it, yourself, in freedom, without hindrance! For that I would have given anything—everything. For that I tried to drive you away!"

"Zelie!" he cried, in wonder. "Is this true? Did you feel so? . . . It was for my sake?"

"What else? . . . Though it tore me: though I died for it! I was not fit for you, but you should have your desire and I could help—a little, however little—to set you on the road. I could free you from danger of Maman—her blackmailing. For always. It was my own hope. But now——! . . . Oh Bibi! . . . Bibi! . . ."

She must have fallen if he had not caught her. And that was the way of it at long end. She loved him. They loved. The convict and the daughter of convicts: lovers of New Caledonia. With what somber consummation!

"But you must escape!" she gasped. The knocking at the door was like to splinter the panels. "There may yet be time. . . . The militaires are coming! Be quick!"

He shook his head.

"It will not do, little one," he answered. "Useless. I should only be run down by black trackers. No. For me, it is finished. . . . But I am quite content."

"If you are taken it means death! . . . And mine!"

"No. Not that either. You owe me, perhaps, one promise."

"Anything you want of me!"

"I bind you to it!"

"Anything you want me to say!"

"Then you will not die: and you will save yourself from worse than death the only way still open. . . . These good sisters are waiting here for you. Do you understand?"

"I understand!" she sobbed, through her weeping. "I am yours. . . . I promise! . . . Only kiss me once!"

It was Mother Carron who recovered some sort of sanity first among us. It was Mother Carron who gathered the

fainting girl and passed her over to the charge of the nuns; Mother Carron who had forethought to snatch one of Carron's jackets from a hook; Mother Carron, finally, who slipped that jacket onto Bibi-Ri and buttoned it carefully to the chin before she would order the door unbarred.

"Well, well—so we land her in the church after all," observed that remarkable woman briskly, at the last: "Chouette, alors! It is honest, at least. . . . And now, stupid, open up and admit the happy bridegroom and let him see what he can see!"

He saw, right enough. He saw as much as was needful. When the door thrust inward, when his two rogue friends of military surveillants rushed through, when that tall devil in long black redingote and high hat, with his flaming yellow eyes and raging front—when M. de Nou himself, I say, confronted us—there we were properly ranged as the actors in a perfectly obvious police case of brawl and murder: prisoner, witnesses, corpus delicti and the succoring clergy: complete.

"What does this mean?" he demanded.

Bibi-Ri faced him—a strange meeting, in truth!

"Me," he said, with his old trick of whimsy. "Only me. Convict 2232. I've been developing my capabilities a little. . . . That's all!"

. . . . . .

So they guillotined Bibi-Ri. In due course, by due process, he passed before the Marine Tribunal, before the Commandant and the Procurator General and the Director and the rest of our salaried philanthropists. They dealt with him faithfully and of a gray early morning they led him from the little door of the condemned cell. They marched him out with his legs hobbled and his hands tied behind his back; with the chaplain tottering at his side and the bayonets of the guard shining martially file and file: with some of the chiefest of these judges to receive him and some hundreds of us convicts drawn up below to do him honor.

Such was the method of his elevation, you will perceive:

such the means by which he attained his ambitions, his uplifted position in the world—when he climbed the scaffold in the courtyard of the central prison on Ile de Nou and took his final look on life.

I was there. For my complicity at Mother Carron's that night and my refusal to testify at the trial they had shipped me back to the Collective. I stood in the front row. I was among those felons whose special privilege is their compulsory attendance at executions. I could miss nothing. Not a word nor a movement. Not the hurried mumbling of the death sentence. Not the ruffling of the drums that covered the fatal preparations. . . . Not even the icy chill to the marrow when we sank there in our ranks on the damp flagstones.

"Convicts: on your knees! Hats off!"

Just as well for me I was allowed to kneel, perhaps. . . . Never mind. . . . It does not bear talking of. Except one thing. One thing I recall to comfort me, as I saw it through a mist of tears, wrung with pity and with awe. And that was Bibi-Ri's last salute to my address before they lashed him on the bascule, under the knife. . . . He smiled at me, the little fellow. Even gayly. Bidding me note as plain as words how he held fast his good courage, how he had kept his counsel and his great secret in prison and would keep them to the end. How he apprehended and viewed clear-eyed the inconceivable grim jest of the family party there on the scaffold: himself and the executioner!

Then he looked away across the harbor, toward the anchorage, and he did not shift his gaze again from that goal of Nouméa. Taking his farewell, Monsieur. Taking his farewell in spirit and quite content, as he had said, I do believe. For this was the day, this the very morning, when the steamer left Nouméa bearing his beloved Zelie for home. . . .

And one other thing I can tell you, crisp and clear. Do you remember when I began I said I had evened the score against M. de Nou? Evened it for always until that fiend shall be dragged to the nethermost level of hell and earn his

reward? Evened it the only way it could be evened on this side of the grave? . . . And so I did. Never was such an evening! Listen:

Ask me not how it was done, by aid of what obscure pressure, through what underground channels. But the miniature—the miniature of Bibi-Ri! You recollect? Somehow, Monsieur—somehow, I say—it found its way into the panier with the head of Bibi-Ri. Somehow the new assistant, Bombiste's successor, discovered it when he "robbed the basket" —when he stooped to gather the little perquisites of office for his master. And somehow and finally it was laid straightway in the palm of M. de Nou. . . .

He glanced at it. I saw him start. I saw him stare. I saw him stand and stand and still stare. I saw him lose bit by bit that shell of damnable pride, that prop of untouched and unrelenting hatred and contempt which was and which had been through all his years, his evil support. . . . He gave a movement, of horror, of growing terror. He stepped over. And he looked into the basket at his handiwork still lying there. He looked and he looked. But he could not know. He cannot know. He can never, never know, Monsieur. . . . For the red mark about that severed neck was all one red mark—do you see?—and the Red Mark remains a mystery forever!

THE CHINK AND THE CHILD*

By Thomas Burke

It is a tale of love and lovers that they tell in the low-lit Causeway that slinks from West India Dock Road to the dark waste of waters beyond. In Pennyfields, too, you may hear it; and I do not doubt that it is told in far-away Tai-Ping, in Singapore, in Tokio, in Shanghai, and those other gay-lamped haunts of wonder whither the wandering people of Limehouse go and whence they return so casually. It is a tale for tears, and should you hear it in the lilied tongue of the yellow men, it would awaken in you all your pity. In our bald speech it must, unhappily, lose its essential fragrance, that quality that will lift an affair of squalor into the loftier spheres of passion and imagination, beauty and sorrow. It will sound unconvincing, a little . . . you know . . . the kind of thing that is best forgotten. Perhaps . . . But listen.

It is Battling Burrows, the lightning welterweight of Shadwell, the box o' tricks, the Tetrarch of the ring, who enters first. Battling Burrows, the pride of Ratcliff, Poplar and Limehouse, and the despair of his manager and backers. For he loved wine, woman and song; and the boxing world held that he couldn't last long on that. There was any amount of money in him for his parasites if only the damned women could be cut out; but again and again would he disappear from his training quarters on the eve of a big fight, to consort with Molly and Dolly, and to drink

* From *Limehouse Nights;* copyright, 1917, by Robert M. McBride & Company. Reprinted by permission of the publishers.

other things than barley-water and lemon-juice. Wherefore Chuck Lightfoot his manager, forced him to fight on any and every occasion while he was good and a money-maker; for at any moment the collapse might come, and Chuck would be called upon by his creditors to strip off that "shirt" which at every contest he laid upon his man.

Battling was of a type that is too common in the eastern districts of London; a type that upsets all accepted classifications. He wouldn't be classed. He was a curious mixture of athleticism and degeneracy. He could run like a deer, leap like a greyhound, fight like a machine, and drink like a suction-hose. He was a bully; he had the courage of the high hero. He was an open-air sport; he had the vices of a French decadent.

It was one of his love adventures that properly begins this tale; for the girl had come to Battling one night with a recital of terrible happenings, of an angered parent, of a slammed door. . . . In her arms was a bundle of white rags. Now Battling, like so many sensualists, was also a sentimentalist. He took that bundle of white rags; he paid the girl money to get into the country; and the bundle of white rags had existed in and about his domicile in Pekin Street, Limehouse, for some eleven years. Her position was nondescript; to the casual observer it would seem that she was Battling's relief punch-ball—an unpleasant post for any human creature to occupy, especially if you are a little girl of twelve, and the place be the one-room household of the lightning welter-weight. When Battling was cross with his manager . . . well, it is indefensible to strike your manager or to throw chairs at him, if he is a good manager; but to use a dog-whip on a small child is permissible and quite as satisfying; at least, he found it so. On these occasions, then, when very cross with his sparring partners, or over-flushed with victory and juice of the grape, he would flog Lucy. But he was reputed by the boys to be a good

fellow. He only whipped the child when he was drunk; and he was only drunk for eight months of the year.

For just over twelve years this bruised little body had crept about Poplar and Limehouse. Always the white face was scarred with red, or black-furrowed with tears; always in her steps and in her look was expectation of dread things. Night after night her sleep was broken by the cheerful Battling's brute voice and violent hands; and terrible were the lessons which life taught her in those few years. Yet, for all the starved face and the transfixed air, there was a lurking beauty about her, a something that called you in the soft curve of her cheek that cried for kisses and was fed with blows, and in the splendid mournfulness that grew in eyes and lips. The brown hair chimed against the pale face, like the rounding of a verse. The blue cotton frock and the broken shoes could not break the loveliness of her slender figure or the shy grace of her movements as she flitted about the squalid alleys of the docks; though in all that region of wasted life and toil and decay, there was not one that noticed her, until . . .

Now there lived in Chinatown, in one lousy room over Mr. Tai Fu's store in Pennyfields, a wandering yellow man, named Cheng Huan. Cheng Huan was a poet. He did not realise it. He had never been able to understand why he was unpopular; and he died without knowing. But a poet he was, tinged with the materialism of his race, and in his poor listening heart strange echoes would awake of which he himself was barely conscious. He regarded things differently from other sailors; he felt things more passionately, and things which they felt not at all; so he lived alone instead of at one of the lodging-houses. Every evening he would sit at his window and watch the street. Then, a little later, he would take a jolt of opium at the place at the corner of Formosa Street.

He had come to London by devious ways. He had loafed

on the Bund at Shanghai. The fateful intervention of a crimp had landed him on a boat. He got to Cardiff, and sojourned in its Chinatown; thence to Liverpool, to Glasgow; thence, by a ticket from the Asiatics' Aid Society, to Limehouse, where he remained for two reasons—because it cost him nothing to live there, and because he was too lazy to find a boat to take him back to Shanghai.

So he would lounge and smoke cheap cigarettes, and sit at his window, from which point he had many times observed the lyrical Lucy. He noticed her casually. Another day, he observed her, not casually. Later, he looked long at her; later still, he began to watch for her and for that strangely provocative something about the toss of the head and the hang of the little blue skirt as it coyly kissed her knee.

Then that beauty which all Limehouse had missed smote Cheng. Straight to his heart it went, and cried itself into his very blood. Thereafter the spirit of poetry broke her blossoms all about his odorous chamber. Nothing was the same. Pennyfields became a happy-lanterned street, and the monotonous fiddle in the house opposite was the music of his fathers. Bits of old song floated through his mind: little sweet verses of Le Tai-pih, murmuring of plum blossom, rice-field and stream. Day by day he would moon at his window, or shuffle about the streets, lighting to a flame when Lucy would pass and gravely return his quiet regard; and night after night, too, he would dream of a pale, lily-lovely child.

And now the Fates moved swiftly various pieces on their sinister board, and all that followed happened with a speed and precision that showed direction from higher ways.

It was Wednesday night in Limehouse, and for once clear of mist. Out of the coloured darkness of the Causeway stole the muffled wail of reed instruments, and, though every window was closely shuttered, between the joints shot jets of light and stealthy voices, and you could hear the whisper of slippered feet, and the stuttering steps of the satyr and the sadist. It was to the café in the middle of the Cause-

way, lit by the pallid blue light that is the symbol of China throughout the world, that Cheng Huan came, to take a dish of noodle and some tea. Thence he moved to another house whose stairs ran straight to the street, and above whose doorway a lamp glowed like an evil eye. At this establishment he mostly took his pipe of "chandu" and a brief chat with the keeper of the house, for, although not popular, and very silent, he liked sometimes to be in the presence of his compatriots. Like a figure of a shadowgraph he slid through the door and up the stairs.

The chamber he entered was a bit of the Orient squatting at the portals of the West. It was a well-kept place where one might play a game of fan-tan, or take a shot or so of *li-un,* or purchase other varieties of Oriental delight. It was sunk in a purple dusk, though here and there a lantern stung the glooms. Low couches lay around the walls, and strange men decorated them: Chinese, Japs, Malays, Lascars, with one or two white girls; and sleek, noiseless attendants swam from couch to couch. Away in the far corner sprawled a lank figure in brown shirting, its nerveless fingers curled about the stem of a spent pipe. On one of the lounges a scorbutic nigger sat with a Jewess from Shadwell. Squatting on a table in the centre, beneath one of the lanterns, was a musician with a reed, blinking upon the company like a sly cat, and making his melody of six repeated notes.

The atmosphere churned. The dirt of years, tobacco of many growings, opium, betel nut, and moist flesh allied themselves in one grand assault against the nostrils.

As Cheng brooded on his insect-ridden cushion, of a sudden the lantern above the musician was caught by the ribbon of his reed. It danced and flung a hazy radiance on a divan in the shadow. He saw—started—half rose. His heart galloped, and the blood pounded in his quiet veins. Then he dropped again, crouched, and stared.

O lily-flowers and plum blossoms! O silver streams and dim-starred skies! O wine and roses, song and laughter!

For there, kneeling on a mass of rugs, mazed and big-eyed, but understanding, was Lucy . . . his Lucy . . . his little maid. Through the dusk she must have felt his intent gaze upon her; for he crouched there, fascinated, staring into the now obscured corner were she knelt.

But the sickness which momentarily gripped him on finding in this place his snowy-breasted pearl passed and gave place to great joy. She was here; he would talk with her. Little English he had, but simple words, those with few gutturals, he had managed to pick up; so he rose, the masterful lover, and, with feline movements, crossed the nightmare chamber to claim his own.

If you wonder how Lucy came to be in this bagnio, the explanation is simple. Battling was in training. He had flogged her that day before starting work; he had then had a few brandies—not many; some eighteen or nineteen—and had locked the door of his room and taken the key. Lucy was, therefore, homeless, and a girl somewhat older than Lucy, so old and so wise, as girls are in that region, saw in her a possible source of revenue. So there they were, and to them appeared Cheng.

From what horrors he saved her that night cannot be told, for her ways were too audaciously childish to hold her long from harm in such a place. What he brought to her was love and death.

For he sat by her. He looked at her—reverently yet passionately. He touched her—wistfully yet eagerly. He locked a finger in her wondrous hair. She did not start away; she did not tremble. She knew well what she had to be afraid of in that place; but she was not afraid of Cheng. She pierced the mephitic gloom and scanned his face. No, she was not afraid. His yellow hands, his yellow face, his smooth black hair . . . well, he was the first thing that had ever spoken soft words to her; the first thing that had ever laid a hand upon her that was not brutal; the first thing that had deferred in manner towards her as though she too, had a right

to live. She knew his words were sweet, though she did not understand them. Nor can they be set down. Half that he spoke was in village Chinese; the rest in a mangling of English which no distorted spelling could possibly reproduce.

But he drew her back against the cushions and asked her name, and she told him; and he inquired her age, and she told him; and he had then two beautiful words which came easily to his tongue. He repeated them again and again: "Lucia . . . li'l Lucia. . . . Twelve. . . . Twelve." Musical phrases they were, dropping from his lips, and to the child who heard her name pronounced so lovingly, they were the lost heights of melody. She clung to him, and he to her. She held his strong arm in both of hers as they crouched on the divan, and nestled her cheek against his coat.

Well . . . he took her home to his wretched room.

"Li'l Lucia, come-a-home . . . Lucia."

His heart was on fire. As they slipped out of the noisomeness into the night air and crossed the West India Dock Road into Pennyfields, they passed unnoticed. It was late, for one thing, and for another . . . well, nobody cared particularly. His blood rang with soft music and the solemnity of drums, for surely he had found now what for many years he had sought—his world's one flower. Wanderer he was, from Tuan-tsen to Shanghai, Shanghai to Glasgow . . . Cardiff . . . Liverpool . . . London. He had dreamed often of the women of his native land; perchance one of them should be his flower. Women, indeed, there had been. Swatow . . . he had collections of certain rose-winged hours in coast cities. At many places to which chance had led him a little bird had perched itself upon his heart, but so lightly and for so brief a while as hardly to be felt. But now—now he had found her in this alabaster Cockney child. So that he was glad and had great joy of himself and the blue and silver night, and the harsh flares of the Poplar Hippodrome.

You will observe that he had claimed her, but had not asked

himself whether she were of an age for love. The white perfection of the child had captivated every sense. It may be that he forgot that he was in London and not in Tuan-tsen. It may be that he did not care. Of that nothing can be told. All that is known is that his love was a pure and holy thing. Of that we may be sure, for his worst enemies have said it.

Slowly, softly they mounted the stairs to his room, and with almost an obeisance he entered and drew her in. A bank of cloud raced to the east and a full moon thrust a sharp sword of light upon them. Silence lay over all Pennyfields. With a bird-like movement, she looked up at him—her face alight, her tiny hands upon his coat—clinging, wondering, trusting. He took her hand and kissed it; repeated the kiss upon her cheek and lip and little bosom, twining his fingers in her hair. Docilely, and echoing the smile of his lemon lips in a way that thrilled him almost to laughter, she returned his kisses impetuously, gladly.

He clasped the nestling to him. Bruised, tearful, with the love of life almost thrashed out of her, she had fluttered to him out of the evil night.

"O li'l Lucia!" And he put soft hands upon her, and smoothed her and crooned over her many gracious things in his flowered speech. So they stood in the moonlight, while she hold him the story of her father, of her beatings, and starvings, and unhappiness.

"O li'l Lucia. . . . White Blossom. . . . Twelve. . . . Twelve years old!"

As he spoke, the clock above the Milwall Docks shot twelve crashing notes across the night. When the last echo died, he moved to a cupboard, and from it he drew strange things . . . formless masses of blue and gold, magical things of silk, and a vessel that was surely Aladdin's lamp, and a box of spices. He took these robes, and, with tender, reverent fingers, removed from his White Blossom the besmirched rags that covered her, and robed her again, and led her then to the heap of stuff that was his bed, and bestowed her safely.

For himself, he squatted on the floor before her, holding one grubby little hand. There he crouched all night, under the lyric moon, sleepless, watchful; and sweet content was his. He had fallen into an uncomfortable posture, and his muscles ached intolerably. But she slept, and he dared not move nor release her hand lest he should awaken her. Weary and trustful, she slept, knowing that the yellow man was kind and that she might sleep with no fear of a steel hand smashing the delicate structure of her dreams.

In the morning, when she awoke, still wearing her blue and yellow silk, she gave a cry of amazement. Cheng had been about. Many times had he glided up and down the two flights of stairs, and now at last his room was prepared for his princess. It was swept and garnished, and was an apartment worthy a maid who is loved by a poet-prince. There was a bead curtain. There were muslins of pink and white. There were four bowls of flowers, clean, clear flowers to gladden the White Blossom and set off her sharp beauty. And there was a bowl of water, and a sweet lotion for the bruise on her cheek.

When she had risen, her prince ministered to her with rice and egg and tea. Cleansed and robed and calm, she sat before him, perched on the edge of many cushions as on a throne, with all the grace of the child princess in the story. She was a poem. The beauty hidden by neglect and fatigue shone out now more clearly and vividly, and from the head sunning over with curls to the small white feet, now bathed and sandalled, she seemed the living interpretation of a Chinese lyric. And she was his; her sweet self and her prattle, and her birdlike ways were all his own.

Oh, beautifully they loved. For two days he held her. Soft caresses from his yellow hands and long, devout kisses were all their demonstration. Each night he would tend her, as might mother to child; and each night, he watched and sometimes slumbered at the foot of her couch.

But now there were those that ran to Battling at his train-

ing quarters across the river, with the news that his child had gone with a Chink—a yellow man. And Battling was angry. He discovered parental rights. He discovered indignation. A yellow man after his kid! He'd learn him. Battling did not like men who were not born in the same great country as himself. Particularly he disliked yellow men. His birth and education in Shadwell had taught him that of all creeping things that creep upon the earth the most insidious is the Oriental in the West. And a yellow man and a child. It was . . . as you might say . . . so . . . kind of . . . well, wasn't it? He bellowed that it was "unnacherel." The yeller man would go through it. Yeller! It was his supreme condemnation, his final epithet for all conduct of which he disapproved.

There was no doubt that he was extremely annoyed. He went to the Blue Lantern, in what was once Ratcliff Highway, and thumped the bar, and made all his world agree with him. And when they agreed with him he got angrier still. So that when, a few hours later, he climbed through the ropes at the Netherlands to meet Bud Tuffit for ten rounds, it was Bud's fight all the time, and to that bright boy's astonishment he was the victor on points at the end of the ten. Battling slouched out of the ring, still more determined to let the Chink have it where the chicken had the axe. He left the house with two pals and a black man, and a number of really inspired curses from his manager.

On the evening of the third day, then, Cheng slipped sleepily down the stairs to procure more flowers and more rice. The genial Ho Ling, who keeps the Canton store, held him in talk some little while, and he was gone from his room perhaps half-an-hour. Then he glided back, and climbed with happy feet the forty stairs to his temple of wonder.

With a push of a finger he opened the door, and the blood froze on his cheek, the flowers fell from him. The temple was empty and desolate; White Blossom was gone. The muslin hangings were torn down and trampled underfoot

The flowers had been flung from their bowls about the floor, and the bowls lay in fifty fragments. The joss was smashed. The cupboard had been opened. Rice was scattered here and there. The little straight bed had been jumped upon by brute feet. Everything that could be smashed or violated had been so treated, and—horror of all—the blue and yellow silk robe had been rent in pieces, tied in grotesque knots, and slung derisively about the table legs.

I pray devoutly that you may never suffer what Cheng Huan suffered in that moment. The pangs of death, with no dying; the sickness of the soul which longs to escape and cannot; the imprisoned animal within the breast which struggles madly for a voice and finds none; all the agonies of all the ages—the agonies of every abandoned lover and lost woman, past and to come—all these things were his in that moment.

Then he found voice and gave a great cry, and men from below came up to him; and they told him how the man who boxed had been there with a black man; how he had torn the robes from his child, and dragged her down the stairs by her hair; and how he had shouted aloud for Cheng and had vowed to return and deal separately with him.

Now a terrible dignity came to Cheng, and the soul of his great fathers swept over him. He closed the door against them, and fell prostrate over what had been the resting-place of White Blossom. Those without heard strange sounds as of an animal in its last pains; and it was even so. Cheng was dying. The sacrament of his high and holy passion had been profaned; the last sanctuary of the Oriental—his soul dignity—had been assaulted. The love robes had been torn to ribbons; the veil of his temple cut down. Life was no longer possible; and life without his little lady, his White Blossom, was no longer desirable.

Prostrate he lay for the space of some five minutes. Then, in his face all the pride of accepted destiny, he arose. He drew together the little bed. With reverent hands he took the

pieces of blue and yellow silk, kissing them and fondling them and placing them about the pillow. Silently he gathered up the flowers, and the broken earthenware, and burnt some prayer papers and prepared himself for death.

Now it is the custom among those of the sect of Cheng that the dying shall present love-gifts to their enemies; and when he had set all in order, he gathered his brown canvas coat about him, stole from the house, and set out to find Battling Burrows, bearing under the coat his love-gift to Battling. White Blossom he had no hope of finding. He had heard of Burrows many times; and he judged that, now that she was taken from him, never again would he hold those hands or touch that laughing hair. Nor, if he did, could it change things from what they were. Nothing that was not a dog could live in the face of this sacrilege.

As he came before the house in Pekin Street, where Battling lived, he murmured gracious prayers. Fortunately, it was a night of thick river mist, and through the enveloping velvet none could observe or challenge him. The main door was open, as are all doors in this district. He writhed across the step, and through to the back room, where again the door yielded to a touch.

Darkness. Darkness and silence, and a sense of frightful things. He peered through it. Then he fumbled under his jacket—found a match—struck it. An inch of candle stood on the mantelshelf. He lit it. He looked around. No sign of Burrows, but . . . Almost before he looked he knew what awaited him. But the sense of finality had kindly stunned him; he could suffer nothing more.

On the table lay a dog-whip. In the corner a belt had been flung. Half across the greasy couch lay White Blossom. A few rags of clothing were about her pale, slim body; her hair hung limp as her limbs; her eyes were closed. As Cheng drew nearer and saw the savage red rails that ran across and across the beloved body, he could not scream—he could not think. He dropped beside the couch. He laid gentle hands

upon her, and called soft names. She was warm to the touch. The pulse was still.

Softly, oh, so softly, he bent over the little frame that had enclosed his friend-spirit, and his light kisses fell all about her. Then, with the undirected movements of a sleep-walker, he bestowed the rags decently about her, clasped her in strong arms, and crept silently into the night.

From Pekin Street to Pennyfields it is but a turn or two, and again he passed unobserved as he bore his tired bird back to her nest. He laid her upon the bed, and covered the lily limbs with the blue and yellow silks and strewed upon her a few of the trampled flowers. Then, with more kisses and prayers, he crouched beside her.

So, in the ghastly Limehouse morning, they were found—the dead child, and the Chink, kneeling beside her, with a sharp knife gripped in a vice-like hand, its blade far between his ribs.

Meantime, having vented his wrath on his prodigal daughter, Battling, still cross, had returned to the Blue Lantern, and there he stayed with a brandy tumbler in his fist, forgetful of an appointment at Premierland, whereby he should have been in the ring at ten o'clock sharp. For the space of an hour Chuck Lightfoot was going blasphemously to and fro in Poplar, seeking Battling and not finding him, and murmuring, in tearful tones: "Battling—you dammanblasted Battling—where are yeh?"

His opponent was in his corner sure enough, but there was no fight. For Battling lurched from the Blue Lantern to Pekin Street. He lurched into his happy home, and he cursed Lucy, and called for her. And finding no matches, he lurched to where he knew the couch should be, and flopped heavily down.

Now it is a peculiarity of the reptile tribe that its members are impatient of being flopped on without warning. So, when Battling flopped, eighteen inches of writhing gristle upreared itself on the couch, and got home on him as Bud Tuffit had

LIBRARY

done the night before—one to the ear, one to the throat, and another to the forearm.

Battling went down and out.

And he, too, was found in the morning, with Cheng Huan's love-gift coiled about his neck.

Reading List

Stories of Plot: Dramatic Incident

Beach, Rex. "The Crimson Gardenia."

Burke, Thomas. "The Gorilla and the Girl," "The Yellow Scarf."

Cobb, Irvin. "Blacker than Sin," "When August the Second Was April the First," "Double Barreled Justice."

Conrad, Joseph. "The Inn of the Two Witches."

Davis, Richard Harding. "Somewhere in France," "Gallegher."

Freeman, Mary E. Wilkins. "The Revolt of Mother."

Garland, Hamlin. "Under the Lion's Paw."

Gelzer, Jay. "The Chinese Lily," "The Gold Lacquered Box," "A Prince of China."

Henry, O. "A Call Loan," "The Guardian of the Accolade," "A Retrieved Reformation," "A Departmental Case," "A Municipal Report."

Jacobs, W. W. "Fairy Gold," "Friends in Need," "Fine Feathers," "Prize Money," "Self Help," "Bob's Redemption," "Blundell's Improvement."

Kipling, Rudyard. "Baa, Baa Black Sheep," "The Man Who Would be King."

London, Jack. "The Madness of John Harned," "Under the Deck Awning," "A Little Account with Swithin Hall."

Mérimée, Prosper. "Mateo Falcone."

Morris, Gouverneur. "The Execution," "The Footprint."

Norris, Frank. "The Third Circle."

Page, Thomas Nelson. "The Outcast."

Parker, Gilbert. "At the Mercy of Tiberius."

Poe, Edgar Allan. "The Pit and the Pendulum," "The Cask of Amontillado."

Pushkin, Alexander. "The Shot," "The Snow Storm."

Russell, John. "East of Eastward," "The Lost God," "The Fourth Man."

Steele, Wilbur D. "Ching, Ching, Chinaman (in O'Brien's *Best Short Stories of 1917*).

TARKINGTON, BOOTH. "Monsieur Beaucaire."
TRAIN, ARTHUR. "The Human Element," "Contempt of Court."
VAN LOAN, CHARLES E. "Out of his Class," "For the Pictures."
WHITE, STEWART EDWARD. "The Girl Who Got Rattled," "The Two Cartridges," "Billy's Tenderfoot."
WILLIAMS, JESSE LYNCH. "The Stolen Story."
ZOLA, EMILE. "The Attack on the Mill."

THE DOOMDORF MYSTERY *

By Melville Davisson Post

The pioneer was not the only man in the great mountains behind Virginia. Strange aliens drifted in after the Colonial wars. All foreign armies are sprinkled with a cockle of adventurers that take root and remain. They were with Braddock and La Salle, and they rode north out of Mexico after her many empires went to pieces.

I think Doomdorf crossed the seas with Iturbide when that ill-starred adventurer returned to be shot against a wall; but there was no Southern blood in him. He came from some European race remote and barbaric. The evidences were all about him. He was a huge figure of a man, with a black spade beard, broad, thick hands, and square, flat fingers.

He had found a wedge of land between the Crown's grant to Daniel Davisson and a Washington survey. It was an uncovered triangle not worth the running of the lines; and so, no doubt, was left out, a sheer rock standing up out of the river for a base, and a peak of the mountain rising northward behind it for an apex.

Doomdorf squatted on the rock. He must have brought a belt of gold pieces when he took to his horse, for he hired old Robert Steuart's slaves and built a stone house on the rock, and he brought the furnishings overland from a frigate in the Chesapeake; and then in the handfuls of earth, wherever a root would hold, he planted the mountain behind his

* From *Uncle Abner;* copyright, 1918, by D. Appleton and Company. Reprinted by permission of the author and the publishers.

house with peach trees. The gold gave out; but the devil is fertile in resources. Doomdorf built a log still and turned the first fruits of the garden into a hell-brew. The idle and the vicious came with their stone jugs, and violence and riot flowed out.

The government of Virginia was remote and its arm short and feeble; but the men who held the lands west of the mountains against the savages under grants from George, and after that held them against George himself, were efficient and expeditious. They had long patience, but when that failed they went up from their fields and drove the thing before them out of the land, like a scourge of God.

There came a day, then, when my Uncle Abner and Squire Randolph rode through the gap of the mountains to have the thing out with Doomdorf. The work of this brew, which had the odors of Eden and the impulses of the devil in it, could be borne no longer. The drunken negroes had shot old Duncan's cattle and burned his haystacks, and the land was on its feet.

They rode alone, but they were worth an army of little men. Randolph was vain and pompous and given over to extravagance of words, but he was a gentleman beneath it, and fear was an alien and a stranger to him. And Abner was the right hand of the land.

It was a day in early summer and the sun lay hot. They crossed through the broken spine of the mountains and trailed along the river in the shade of the great chestnut trees. The road was only a path and the horses went one before the other. It left the river when the rock began to rise and, making a detour through the grove of peach trees, reached the house on the mountain side. Randolph and Abner got down, unsaddled their horses and turned them out to graze, for their business with Doomdorf would not be over in an hour. Then they took a steep path that brought them out on the mountain side of the house.

A man sat on a big red-roan horse in the paved court before

the door. He was a gaunt old man. He sat bare-headed, the palms of his hands resting on the pommel of his saddle, his chin sunk in his black stock, his face in retrospection, the wind moving gently his great shock of voluminous white hair. Under him the huge red horse stood with his legs spread out like a horse of stone.

There was no sound. The door to the house was closed; insects moved in the sun; a shadow crept out from the motionless figure, and swarms of yellow butterflies maneuvered like an army.

Abner and Randolph stopped. They knew the tragic figure —a circuit rider of the hills who preached the invective of Isaiah as though he were the mouthpiece of a militant and avenging overlord; as though the government of Virginia were the awful theocracy of the Book of Kings. The horse was dripping with sweat and the man bore the dust and the evidences of a journey on him.

"Bronson," said Abner, "where is Doomdorf?"

The old man lifted his head and looked down at Abner over the pommel of the saddle.

" 'Surely,' " he said, " 'he covereth his feet in his summer chamber.' "

Abner went over and knocked on the closed door, and presently the white, frightened face of a woman looked out at him. She was a little, faded woman, with fair hair, a broad foreign face, but with the delicate evidences of gentle blood.

Abner repeated his question.

"Where is Doomdorf?"

"Oh, sir," she answered with a queer lisping accent, "he went to lie down in his south room after his midday meal, as his custom is; and I went to the orchard to gather any fruit that might be ripened." She hesitated and her voice lisped into a whisper: "He is not come out and I cannot wake him."

The two men followed her through the hall and up the stairway to the door.

"It is always bolted," she said, "when he goes to lie down." And she knocked feebly with the tips of her fingers.

There was no answer and Randolph rattled the doorknob.

"Come out, Doomdorf!" he called in his big, bellowing voice.

There was only silence and the echoes of the words among the rafters. Then Randolph set his shoulder to the door and burst it open.

They went in. The room was flooded with sun from the tall south windows. Doomdorf lay on a couch in a little offset of the room, a great scarlet patch on his bosom and a pool of scarlet on the floor.

The woman stood for a moment staring; then she cried out: "At last I have killed him!" And she ran like a frightened hare.

The two men closed the door and went over to the couch. Doomdorf had been shot to death. There was a great ragged hole in his waistcoat. They began to look about for the weapon with which the deed had been accomplished, and in a moment found it—a fowling piece lying in two dogwood forks against the wall. The gun had just been fired; there was a freshly exploded paper cap under the hammer.

There was little else in the room—a loom-woven rag carpet on the floor; wooden shutters flung back from the windows; a great oak table, and on it a big, round, glass water bottle, filled to its glass stopper with raw liquor from the still. The stuff was limpid and clear as spring water; and, but for its pungent odor, one would have taken it for God's brew instead of Doomdorf's. The sun lay on it and against the wall where hung the weapon that had ejected the dead man out of life.

"Abner," said Randolph, "this is murder! The woman took that gun down from the wall and shot Doomdorf while he slept."

Abner was standing by the table, his fingers round his chin.

"Randolph," he replied, "what brought Bronson here?"

"The same outrages that brought us," said Randolph. "The mad old circuit rider has been preaching a crusade against Doomdorf far and wide in the hills."

Abner answered, without taking his fingers from about his chin:

"You think this woman killed Doomdorf? Well, let us go and ask Bronson who killed him."

They closed the door, leaving the dead man on his couch, and went down into the court.

The old circuit rider had put away his horse and got an ax. He had taken off his coat and pushed his shirtsleeves up over his long elbows. He was on his way to the still to destroy the barrels of liquor. He stopped when the two men came out, and Abner called to him.

"Bronson," he said, "who killed Doomdorf?"

"I killed him," replied the old man, and went on toward the still.

Randolph swore under his breath. "By the Almighty," he said, "everybody couldn't kill him!"

"Who can tell how many had a hand in it?" replied Abner.

"Two have confessed!" cried Randolph. "Was there perhaps a third? Did you kill him, Abner? And I too? Man, the thing is impossible!"

"The impossible," replied Abner, "looks here like the truth. Come with me, Randolph, and I will show you a thing more impossible than this."

They returned through the house and up the stairs to the room. Abner closed the door behind them.

"Look at this bolt," he said; "it is on the inside and not connected with the lock. How did the one who killed Doomdorf get into this room, since the door was bolted?"

"Through the windows," replied Randolph.

There were but two windows, facing the south, through which the sun entered. Abner led Randolph to them.

"Look!" he said. "The wall of the house is plumb with

the sheer face of the rock. It is a hundred feet to the river and the rock is as smooth as a sheet of glass. But that is not all. Look at these window frames; they are cemented into their casement with dust and they are bound along their edges with cobwebs. These windows have not been opened. How did the assassin enter?"

"The answer is evident," said Randolph: "The one who killed Doomdorf hid in the room until he was asleep; then shot him and went out."

"The explanation is excellent but for one thing," replied Abner: "How did the assassin bolt the door behind him on the inside of this room after he had gone out?"

Randolph flung out his arms with a hopeless gesture.

"Who knows?" he cried. "Maybe Doomdorf killed himself."

Abner laughed.

"And after firing a handful of shot into his heart he got up and put the gun back carefully into the forks against the wall!"

"Well," cried Randolph, "there is one open road out of this mystery. Bronson and this woman say they killed Doomdorf, and if they killed him they surely know how they did it. Let us go down and ask them."

"In the law court," replied Abner, "that procedure would be considered sound sense; but we are in God's court and things are managed there in a somewhat stranger way. Before we go let us find out, if we can, at what hour it was that Doomdorf died."

He went over and took a big silver watch out of the dead man's pocket. It was broken by a shot and the hands lay at one hour after noon. He stood for a moment fingering his chin.

"At one o'clock," he said. "Bronson, I think, was on the road to this place, and the woman was on the mountain among the peach trees."

Randolph threw back his shoulders.

"Why waste time in a speculation about it, Abner?" he said. "We know who did this thing. Let us go and get the story of it out of their own mouths. Doomdorf died by the hands of either Bronson or this woman."

"I could better believe it," replied Abner, "but for the running of a certain awful law."

"What law?" said Randolph. "Is it a statute of Virginia?"

"It is a statute," replied Abner, "of an authority somewhat higher. Mark the language of it: 'He that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword.'"

He came over and took Randolph by the arm.

"Must! Randolph, did you mark particularly the word 'must'? It is a mandatory law. There is no room in it for the vicissitudes of chance or fortune. There is no way round that word. Thus, we reap what we sow and nothing else; thus, we receive what we give and nothing else. It is the weapon in our own hands that finally destroys us. You are looking at it now." And he turned him about so that the table and the weapon and the dead man were before him. "'He that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword.' And now," he said, "let us go and try the method of the law courts. Your faith is in the wisdom of their ways."

They found the old circuit rider at work in the still, staving in Doomdorf's liquor casks, splitting the oak heads with his ax.

"Bronson," said Randolph, "how did you kill Doomdorf?"

The old man stopped and stood leaning on his ax.

"I killed him," replied the old man, "as Elijah killed the captains of Ahaziah and their fifties. But not by the hand of any man did I pray the Lord God to destroy Doomdorf, but with fire from heaven to destroy him."

He stood up and extended his arms.

"His hands were full of blood," he said. "With his abomination from these groves of Baal he stirred up the people to contention, to strife and murder. The widow and the orphan

cried to heaven against him. 'I will surely hear their cry,' is the promise written in the Book. The land was weary of him; and I prayed the Lord God to destroy him with fire from heaven, as he destroyed the Princes of Gomorrah in their palaces!"

Randolph made a gesture as of one who dismisses the impossible, but Abner's face took on a deep, strange look.

"With fire from heaven!" he repeated slowly to himself. Then he asked a question. "A little while ago," he said, "when we came, I asked you where Doomdorf was, and you answered me in the language of the third chapter of the Book of Judges. Why did you answer me like that, Bronson?—'Surely he covereth his feet in his summer chamber.'"

"The woman told me that he had not come down from the room where he had gone up to sleep," replied the old man, "and that the door was locked. And then I knew that he was dead in his summer chamber like Eglon, King of Moab."

He extended his arm toward the south.

"I came here from the Great Valley," he said, "to cut down these groves of Baal and to empty out this abomination; but I did not know that the Lord had heard my prayer and visited His wrath on Doomdorf until I was come up into these mountains to his door. When the woman spoke I knew it." And he went away to his horse, leaving the ax among the ruined barrels.

Randolph interrupted.

"Come Abner," he said; "this is wasted time. Bronson did not kill Doomdorf."

Abner answered slowly in his deep, level voice:

"Do you realize, Randolph, how Doomdorf died?"

"Not by fire from heaven, at any rate," said Randolph.

"Randolph," replied Abner, "are you sure?"

"Abner," cried Randolph, "you are pleased to jest, but I am in deadly earnest. A crime has been done here against the state. I am an officer of justice and I propose to discover the assassin if I can."

He walked away toward the house and Abner followed, his hands behind him and his great shoulders thrown loosely forward, with a grim smile about his mouth.

"It is no use to talk with the mad old preacher," Randolph went on. "Let him empty out the liquor and ride away. I won't issue a warrant against him. Prayer may be a handy implement to do a murder with, Abner, but it is not a deadly weapon under the statutes of Virginia. Doomdorf was dead when old Bronson got here with his Scriptural jargon. This woman killed Doomdorf. I shall put her to an inquisition."

"As you like," replied Abner. "Your faith remains in the methods of the law courts."

"Do you know of any better methods?" said Randolph.

"Perhaps," replied Abner, "when you have finished."

Night had entered the valley. The two men went into the house and set about preparing the corpse for burial. They got candles, and made a coffin, and put Doomdorf in it, and straightened out his limbs, and folded his arms across his shot-out heart. Then they set the coffin on benches in the hall.

They kindled a fire in the dining room and sat down before it, with the door open and the red firelight shining through on the dead man's narrow, everlasting house. The woman had put some cold meat, a golden cheese and a loaf on the table. They did not see her, but they heard her moving about the house; and finally, on the gravel court outside, her step and the whinny of a horse. Then she came in, dressed as for a journey. Randolph sprang up.

"Where are you going?" he said.

"To the sea and a ship," replied the woman. Then she indicated the hall with a gesture. "He is dead and I am free."

There was a sudden illumination in her face. Randolph took a step toward her. His voice was big and harsh.

"Who killed Doomdorf?" he cried.

"I killed him," replied the woman. "It was fair!"

"Fair!" echoed the justice. "What do you mean by that?"

The woman shrugged her shoulders and put out her hands with a foreign gesture.

"I remember an old, old man sitting against a sunny wall, and a little girl, and one who came and talked a long time with the old man, while the little girl plucked yellow flowers out of the grass and put them into her hair. Then finally the stranger gave the old man a gold chain and took the little girl away." She flung out her hands. "Oh, it was fair to kill him!" She looked up with a queer, pathetic smile.

"The old man will be gone by now," she said; "but I shall perhaps find the wall there, with the sun on it, and the yellow flowers in the grass. And now, may I go?"

It is a law of the story-teller's art that he does not tell a story. It is the listener who tells it. The story-teller does but provide him with the stimuli.

Randolph got up and walked about the floor. He was a justice of the peace in a day when that office was filled only by the landed gentry, after the English fashion; and the obligations of the law were strong on him. If he should take liberties with the letter of it, how could the weak and the evil be made to hold it in respect? Here was this woman before him a confessed assassin. Could he let her go?

Abner sat unmoving by the hearth, his elbow on the arm of his chair, his palm propping up his jaw, his face clouded in deep lines. Randolph was consumed with vanity and the weakness of ostentation, but he shouldered his duties for himself. Presently he stopped and looked at the woman, wan, faded like some prisoner of legend escaped out of fabled dungeons into the sun.

The firelight flickered past her to the box on the benches in the hall, and the vast, inscrutable justice of heaven entered and overcame him.

"Yes," he said. "Go! There is no jury in Virginia that

would hold a woman for shooting a beast like that." And he thrust out his arm, with the fingers extended toward the dead man.

The woman made a little awkward curtsy.

"I thank you, sir." Then she hesitated and lisped, "But I have not shoot him."

"Not shoot him!" cried Randolph. "Why, the man's heart is riddled!"

"Yes, sir," she said simply, like a child. "I kill him, but have not shoot him."

Randolph took two long strides toward the woman.

"Not shoot him!" he repeated. "How then, in the name of heaven, did you kill Doomdorf?" And his big voice filled the empty places of the room.

"I will show you, sir," she said.

She turned and went away into the house. Presently she returned with something folded up in a linen towel. She put it on the table between the loaf of bread and the yellow cheese.

Randolph stood over the table, and the woman's deft fingers undid the towel from round its deadly contents; and presently the thing lay there uncovered.

It was a little crude model of a human figure done in wax with a needle thrust through the bosom.

Randolph stood up with a great intake of the breath.

"Magic! By the eternal!"

"Yes, sir," the woman explained, in her voice and manner of a child. "I have try to kill him many times—oh, very many times!—with witch words which I have remember; but always they fail. Then, at last, I make him in wax, and I put a needle through his heart; and I kill him very quickly."

It was as clear as daylight, even to Randolph, that the woman was innocent. Her little harmless magic was the pathetic effort of a child to kill a dragon. He hesitated a moment before he spoke, and then he decided like the

gentleman he was. If it helped the child to believe that her enchanted straw had slain the monster—well he would let her believe it.

"And now, sir, may I go?"

Randolph looked at the woman in a sort of wonder.

"Are you not afraid," he said, "of the night and the mountains, and the long road?"

"Oh no, sir," she replied simply. "The good God will be everywhere now."

It was an awful commentary on the dead man—that this strange half-child believed that all the evil in the world had gone out with him; that now that he was dead, the sunlight of heaven would fill every nook and corner.

It was not a faith that either of the two men wished to shatter, and they let her go. It would be daylight presently and the road through the mountains to the Chesapeake was open.

Randolph came back to the fireside after he had helped her into the saddle, and sat down. He tapped on the hearth for some time idly with the iron poker; and then finally he spoke.

"This is the strangest thing that ever happened," he said. "Here's a mad old preacher who thinks that he killed Doomdorf with fire from Heaven, like Elijah the Tishbite; and here is a simple child of a woman who thinks she killed him with a piece of magic of the Middle Ages—each as innocent of his death as I am. And yet, by the eternal, the beast is dead!"

He drummed on the hearth with the poker, lifting it up and letting it drop through the hollow of his fingers.

"Somebody shot Doomdorf. But who? And how did he get into and out of that shut-up room? The assassin that killed Doomdorf must have gotten into the room to kill him. Now, how did he get in?" He spoke as to himself; but my uncle sitting across the hearth replied:

"Through the window."

"Through the window!" echoed Randolph: "Why, man, you yourself showed me that the window had not been opened, and the precipice below it a fly could hardly climb. Do you tell me now that the window was opened?"

"No," said Abner, "it was never opened."

Randolph got on his feet.

"Abner," he cried, "are you saying that the one who killed Doomdorf climbed the sheer wall and got in through a closed window, without disturbing the dust or the cobwebs on the window frame?"

My uncle looked Randolph in the face.

"The murderer of Doomdorf did even more," he said. "That assassin not only climbed the face of that precipice and got in through the closed window, but he shot Doomdorf to death and got out again through the closed window without leaving a single track or trace behind, and without disturbing a grain of dust or a thread of cobweb."

Randolph swore a great oath.

"The thing is impossible!" he cried. "Men are not killed today in Virginia by black art or a curse of God."

"By black art, no," replied Abner; "but by the curse of God, yes. I think they are."

Randolph drove his clenched right hand into the palm of his left.

"By the eternal!" he cried. "I would like to see the assassin who could do a murder like this, whether he be an imp from the pit or an angel out of Heaven."

"Very well," replied Abner, undisturbed. "When he comes back tomorrow I will show you the assassin who killed Doomdorf."

When day broke they dug a grave and buried the dead man against the mountain among his peach trees. It was noon when that work was ended. Abner threw down his spade and looked up at the sun.

"Randolph," he said, "let us go and lay an ambush for this assassin. He is on the way here."

And it was a strange ambush that he laid. When they were come again into the chamber where Doomdorf died he bolted the door; then he loaded the fowling piece and put it carefully back on its rack against the wall. After that he did another curious thing: He took the blood-stained coat, which they had stripped off the dead man when they had prepared his body for the earth, put a pillow in it and laid it on the couch precisely where Doomdorf had slept. And while he did these things Randolph stood in wonder and Abner talked:

"Look you, Randolph. . . . We will trick the murderer. . . . We will catch him in the act."

Then he went over and took the puzzled justice by the arm.

"Watch!" he said. "The assassin is coming along the wall!"

But Randolph heard nothing, saw nothing. Only the sun entered. Abner's hand tightened on his arm.

"It is here! Look!" And he pointed to the wall.

Randolph, following the extended finger, saw a tiny brilliant disk of light moving slowly up the wall toward the lock of the fowling piece. Abner's hand became a vise and his voice rang as over metal.

"'He that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword.' It is the water bottle, full of Doomdorf's liquor, focusing the sun. . . . And look, Randolph, how Bronson's prayer was answered!"

The tiny disk of light traveled on the plate of the lock.

"It is fire from heaven!"

The words rang above the roar of the fowling piece, and Randolph saw the dead man's coat leap up on the couch, riddled by the shot. The gun, in its natural position on the rack, pointed to the couch standing at the end of the chamber, beyond the offset of the wall, and the focused sun had exploded the percussion cap.

Randolph made a great gesture, with his arm extended.

"It is a world," he said, "filled with the mysterious joinder of accident!"

"It is a world," replied Abner, "filled with the mysterious justice of God!"

Reading List

Stories of Plot: Detective and Mystery

Bailey, H. C. "The Nice Girl."

Chambers, R. W. "An Air Line."

Chesterton, G. K. *The Innocence of Father Brown, The Wisdom of Father Brown.*

Crabb, Arthur. "Among Gentlemen," "A Story Apropos," "Juror No. 5."

Doyle, A. Conan. "The Dancing Men," "The Northwood Builder," "The Dying Detective," "Silver Blaze," "The Red-Headed League," "The Speckled Band," "A Scandal in Bohemia," "The Final Problem."

Green, Anna Katherine. *Room No. 3, and Other Detective Stories.*

Jenkins, Herbert. *Malcolm Sage, Detective.*

Morley, Christopher. "The Curious Case of Keneln Digby."

Pertwee, Roland. "The Seven Khang-he Vases," "The Cellini Salt-Cellar," "Eggshell," "The Thirteenth Chair."

Poe, Edgar Allan. "The Gold Bug," "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," "The Purloined Letter."

Post, Melville D. "An Act of God," "The Straw Man," "The Adopted Daughter," "The Reward," "The Cambered Foot," "The Thing on the Hearth," "The Wrong Sign," "Madame Versay," "An Adventure of St. Valentine's Night," "The Intriguer," "The Mystery at the Blue Villa," "The Witch of the Lecca," "Lord Winston's Adventure."

Reeve, Arthur B. *The Silent Bullet, The Poisoned Pen, The Dream Doctor, The Treasure Train.*

Twain, Mark. "A Double Barreled Detective Story."

HOW IT HAPPENED *

By A. Conan Doyle

She was a writing medium. This is what she wrote:—

I can remember some things upon that evening most distinctly, and others are like some vague, broken dreams. That is what makes it so difficult to tell a connected story. I have no idea now what it was that had taken me to London and brought me back so late. It just merges into all my other visits to London. But from the time that I got out at the little country station everything is extraordinarily clear. I can live it again—every instant of it.

I remember so well walking down the platform and looking at the illuminated clock at the end which told me that it was half-past eleven. I remember also my wondering whether I could get home before midnight. Then I remember the big motor, with its glaring headlights and glitter of polished brass, waiting for me outside. It was my new thirty-horse-power Robur, which had only been delivered that day. I remember also asking Perkins, my chauffeur, how she had gone, and his saying that he thought she was excellent.

"I'll try her myself," said I, and I climbed into the driver's seat.

"The gears are not the same," said he. "Perhaps, sir, I had better drive."

"No; I should like to try her," said I.

* From *Danger! and Other Stories;* copyright, 1919, by George H. Doran Company. Reprinted by permission of the author and the publishers.

And so we started on the five-mile drive for home.

My old car had the gears as they used always to be in notches on a bar. In this car you passed the gear-lever through a gate to get on the higher ones. It was not difficult to master, and soon I thought that I understood it. It was foolish, no doubt, to begin to learn a new system in the dark, but one often does foolish things, and one has not always to pay the full price for them. I got along very well until I came to Claystall Hill. It is one of the worst hills in England, a mile and a half long and one in six in places with three fairly sharp curves. My park gates stand at the very foot of it upon the main London road.

We were just over the brow of this hill, where the grade is steepest, when the trouble began. I had been on the top speed, and wanted to get her on the free; but she stuck between gears, and I had to get her back on the top again. By this time she was going at a great rate, so I clapped on both brakes, and one after the other they gave way. I didn't mind so much when I felt my foot brake snap, but when I put all my weight on my side-brake, and the lever clanged to its full limit without a catch, it brought a cold sweat out of me. By this time we were fairly tearing down the slope. The lights were brilliant, and I brought her round the first curve all right. Then we did the second one, though it was a close shave for the ditch. There was a mile of straight then with the third curve beneath it, and after that the gate of the park. If I could shoot into that harbour all would be well, for the slope up to the house would bring her to a stand.

Perkins behaved splendidly. I should like that to be known. He was perfectly cool and alert. I had thought at the very beginning of taking the bank, and he read my intention.

"I wouldn't do it, sir," said he. "At this pace it must go over and we should have it on the top of us."

Of course he was right. He got to the electric switch and had it off, so we were in the free; but we were still running at a fearful pace. He laid his hands on the wheel.

"I'll keep her steady," said he, "if you care to jump and chance it. We can never get round that curve. Better jump, sir."

"No," said I; "I'll stick it out. You can jump if you like."

"I'll stick it with you, sir," said he.

If it had been the old car I should have jammed the gear-lever into the reverse, and seen what would happen. I expect she would have stripped her gears or smashed up somehow, but it would have been a chance. As it was, I was helpless. Perkins tried to climb across, but you couldn't do it going at that pace. The wheels were whirring like a high wind and the big body creaking and groaning with the strain. But the lights were brilliant, and one could steer to an inch. I remember thinking what an awful and yet majestic sight we should appear to any one who met us. It was a narrow road, and we were just a great, roaring, golden death to any one who came in our path.

We got round the corner with one wheel three feet high upon the bank. I thought we were surely over, but after staggering for a moment she righted and darted onwards. That was the third corner and the last one. There was the only the park gate now. It was facing us, but as luck would have it, not facing us directly. It was about twenty yards to the left up the main road into which we ran. Perhaps I could have done it, but I expect that the steering-gear had been jarred when we ran on the bank. The wheel did not turn easily. We shot out of the lane. I saw the open gate on the left. I whirled round my wheel with all the strength of my wrists. Perkins and I threw our bodies across, and then the next instant, going at fifty miles an hour, my right front wheel struck full on the right-hand pillar of my own gate. I heard the crash. I was conscious of flying through the air, and then—and then——!

When I became aware of my own existence once more I was among some brushwood in the shadow of the oaks upon the lodge side of the drive. A man was standing beside me.

I imagined at first that it was Perkins, but when I looked again I saw that it was Stanley, a man whom I had known at college some years before, and for whom I had a really genuine affection. There was always something peculiarly sympathetic to me in Stanley's personality; and I was proud to think that I had some similar influence upon him. At the present moment I was surprised to see him, but I was like a man in a dream, giddy and shaken and quite prepared to take things as I found them, without questioning them.

"What a smash!" I said. "Good Lord, what an awful smash!"

He nodded his head, and even in the gloom I could see that he was smiling the gentle wistful smile which I connected with him.

I was quite unable to move. Indeed, I had not any desire to try to move. But my senses were exceedingly alert. I saw the wreck of the motor lit up by the moving lanterns. I saw the little group of people and heard the hushed voices. There were the lodge-keeper and his wife, and one or two more. They were taking no notice of me, but were very busy round the car. Then suddenly I heard a cry of pain.

"The weight is on him. Lift it easy," cried a voice.

"It's only my leg!" said another one, which I recognised as Perkins's. "Where's master?" he cried.

"Here I am," I answered, but they did not seem to hear me. They were all bending over something which lay in front of the car.

Stanley laid his hand upon my shoulder, and his touch was inexpressibly soothing. I felt light and happy, in spite of all.

"No pain, of course?" said he.

"None," said I.

"There never is," said he.

And then suddenly a wave of amazement passed over me. Stanley! Stanley! Why, Stanley had surely died of enteric at Bloemfontein in the Boer War!

"Stanley!" I cried, and the words seemed to choke my throat—"Stanley, you are dead."

He looked at me with the same old gentle, wistful smile. "So are you," he answered.

Reading List

Stories of Plot: Ingenuity and Surprise

Aldrich, Thomas Bailey. "Majorie, Daw."
Barbour, R. H. and Osbourne, G. R. "Thicker than Water" (Masson's *Short Stories from 'Life'*).
Burke, Thomas. "Katie the Kid," "Blue-Bell," "The Perfect Girl," "A Game of Poker."
Chekhov, Anton. "A Work of Art."
Child, Richard Washburn. "Identified," "The Cracking Knee," "Foxed."
Cobb, Irvin. "An Occurrence up a Side Street."
Fitzgerald, F. Scott. "Head and Shoulders."
Greene, Frederick S. "The Cat of the Cane-Brake (O'Brien's *Best Short Stories of 1916*), "The Bunker Mouse" (O'Brien's *Best Short Stories of 1917*).
Henry, O. "October and June," "The Gift of the Magi," "The Love Philtre of Ikey Schoenstein," "Thimble, Thimble," "Next to Reading Matter," "While the Auto Waits," "The Whirligig of Life," "The Hiding of Black Bill."
Ingalls, R. "Business and Ethics" (Masson's *Short Stories from 'Life'*).
Jacobs, W. W. "The Bequest."
London, Jack. "Just Meat."
Maupassant, Guy de. "The Necklace."
Morley, Christopher. "Advice to the Lovelorn," "The Commutation Chophouse."
Russell, John. "The Practicing of Christopher," "The Price of the Head."
Steele, Wilbur D. "Footfalls." (See *Prize Stories of 1920.*)
Train, Arthur. "Samuel and Delilah," "Wile Versus Guile."
White, Stewart Edward. "The Scaler."
Williams, Ben Ames. "They Grind Exceeding Small." (See *Prize Stories of 1919.*)

A JURY OF HER PEERS *

By Susan Glaspell

When Martha Hale opened the storm-door and got a cut of the north wind, she ran back for her big woolen scarf. As she hurriedly wound that round her head her eye made a scandalized sweep of her kitchen. It was no ordinary thing that called her away—it was probably farther from ordinary than anything that had ever happened in Dickson County. But what her eye took in was that her kitchen was in no shape for leaving: her bread all ready for mixing, half the flour sifted and half unsifted.

She hated to see things half done; but she had been at that when the team from town stopped to get Mr. Hale, and then the sheriff came running in to say his wife wished Mrs. Hale would come too—adding, with a grin that he guessed she was getting scarey and wanted another woman along. So she had dropped everything right where it was.

"Martha!" now came her husband's impatient voice. "Don't keep folks waiting out here in the cold."

She again opened the storm-door, and this time joined the three men and the one woman waiting for her in the big two-seated buggy.

After she had the robes tucked around her she took another look at the woman who sat beside her on the back seat. She had met Mrs. Peters the year before at the county fair, and the thing she remembered about her was that she didn't

* From *Every Week* for March 5, 1917; copyright, 1918, by Susan Glaspell. Reprinted by permission of the author and the Crowell Publishing Company.

seem like a sheriff's wife. She was small and thin and didn't have a strong voice. Mrs. Gorman, sheriff's wife before Gorman went out and Peters came in, had a voice that somehow seemed to be backing up the law with every word. But if Mrs. Peters didn't look like a sheriff's wife, Peters made it up in looking like a sheriff. He was to a dot the kind of man who could get himself elected sheriff—a heavy man with a big voice, who was particularly genial with the law-abiding, as if to make it plain that he knew the difference between criminals and non-criminals. And right there it came into Mrs. Hale's mind, with a stab, that this man who was so pleasant and lively with all of them was going to the Wrights' now as a sheriff.

"The country's not very pleasant this time of year," Mrs. Peters at last ventured, as if she felt they ought to be talking as well as the men.

Mrs. Hale scarcely finished her reply, for they had gone up a little hill and could see the Wright place now, and seeing it did not make her feel like talking. It looked very lonesome this cold March morning. It had always been a lonesome-looking place. It was down in a hollow, and the poplar trees around it were lonesome-looking trees. The men were looking at it and talking about what had happened. The county attorney was bending to one side of the buggy, and kept looking steadily at the place as they drew up to it.

"I'm glad you came with me," Mrs. Peters said nervously, as the two women were about to follow the men in through the kitchen door.

Even after she had her foot on the door-step, her hand on the knob, Martha Hale had a moment of feeling she could not cross that threshold. And the reason it seemed she couldn't cross it now was simply because she hadn't crossed it before. Time and time again it had been in her mind, "I ought to go over and see Minnie Foster"—she still thought of her as Minnie Foster, though for twenty years she had been Mrs. Wright. And then there was always something to do

and Minnie Foster would go from her mind. But *now* she could come.

The men went over to the stove. The women stood close together by the door. Young Henderson, the county attorney, turned around and said, "Come up to the fire, ladies."

Mrs. Peters took a step forward, then stopped. "I'm not —cold," she said.

And so the two women stood by the door, at first not even so much as looking around the kitchen.

The men talked for a minute about what a good thing it was the sheriff had sent his deputy out that morning to make a fire for them, and then Sheriff Peters stepped back from the stove, unbuttoned his outer coat, and leaned his hands on the kitchen table in a way that seemed to mark the beginning of official business. "Now, Mr. Hale," he said in a sort of semi-official voice, "before we move things about, you tell Mr. Henderson just what it was you saw when you came here yesterday morning."

The county attorney was looking around the kitchen.

"By the way," he said, "has anything been moved?" He turned to the sheriff. "Are things just as you left them yesterday?"

Peters looked from cupboard to sink; from that to a small worn rocker a little to one side of the kitchen table.

"It's just the same."

"Somebody should have been left here yesterday," said the county attorney.

"Oh—yesterday," returned the sheriff, with a little gesture as of yesterday having been more than he could bear to think of. "When I had to send Frank to Morris Center for that man who went crazy—let me tell you, I had my hands full *yesterday*. I knew you could get back from Omaha by to-day, George, and as long as I went over everything here myself——"

"Well, Mr. Hale," said the county attorney, in a way of

letting what was past and gone go, "tell just what happened when you came here yesterday morning."

Mrs. Hale, still leaning against the door, had that sinking feeling of the mother whose child is about to speak a piece. Lewis often wandered along and got things mixed up in a story. She hoped he would tell this straight and plain, and not say unnecessary things that would just make things harder for Minnie Foster. He didn't begin at once, and she noticed that he looked queer—as if standing in that kitchen and having to tell what he had seen there yesterday morning made him almost sick.

"Yes, Mr. Hale?" the county attorney reminded.

"Harry and I had started to town with a load of potatoes," Mrs. Hale's husband began.

Harry was Mrs. Hale's oldest boy. He wasn't with them now, for the very good reason that those potatoes never got to town yesterday and he was taking them this morning, so he hadn't been home when the sheriff stopped to say he wanted Mr. Hale to come over to the Wright place and tell the county attorney his story there, where he could point it all out. With all Mrs. Hale's other emotions came the fear now that maybe Harry wasn't dressed warm enough—they hadn't any of them realized how that north wind did bite.

"We come along this road," Hale was going on, with a motion of his hand to the road over which they had just come, "and as we got in sight of the house I says to Harry, 'I'm goin' to see if I can't get John Wright to take a telephone.' You see," he explained to Henderson, "unless I can get somebody to go in with me they won't come out this branch road except for a price *I* can't pay. I'd spoke to Wright about it once before; but he put me off, saying folks talked too much anyway, and all he asked was peace and quiet—guess you know about how much he talked himself. But I thought maybe if I went to the house and talked about it before his wife, and said all the women-folks liked the telephones, and

that in this lonesome stretch of road it would be a good thing —well, I said to Harry that that was what I was going to say—though I said at the same time that I didn't know as what his wife wanted made much difference to John——"

Now, there he was!—saying things he didn't need to say. Mrs. Hale tried to catch her husband's eye, but fortunately the county attorney interrupted with:

"Let's talk about that a little later, Mr. Hale. I do want to talk about that but I'm anxious now to get along to just what happened when you got here."

When he began this time, it was very deliberately and carefully:

"I didn't see or hear anything. I knocked at the door. And still it was all quiet inside. I knew they must be up —it was past eight o'clock. So I knocked again, louder, and I thought I heard somebody say, 'Come in.' I wasn't sure— I'm not sure yet. But I opened the door—this door," jerking a hand toward the door by which the two women stood, "and there, in that rocker"—pointing to it—"sat Mrs. Wright."

Every one in the kitchen looked at the rocker. It came into Mrs. Hale's mind that that rocker didn't look in the least like Minnie Foster—the Minnie Foster of twenty years before. It was a dingy red, with wooden rungs up the back, and the middle rung was gone, and the chair sagged to one side.

"How did she—look?" the county attorney was inquiring.

"Well," said Hale, "she looked—queer."

"How do you mean—queer?"

As he asked it he took out a note-book and pencil. Mrs. Hale did not like the sight of that pencil. She kept her eye fixed on her husband, as if to keep him from saying unnecessary things that would go into that note-book and make trouble.

Hale did speak guardedly, as if the pencil had affected him too.

"Well, as if she didn't know what she was going to do next. And kind of—done up."

"How did she seem to feel about your coming?"

"Why, I don't think she minded—one way or other. She didn't pay much attention. I said, 'Ho' do, Mrs. Wright? It's cold, ain't it?' And she said, 'Is it?'—and went on pleatin' at her apron.

"Well, I was surprised. She didn't ask me to come up to the stove, or to sit down, but just set there, not even lookin' at me. And so I said: 'I want to see John.'

"And then she laughed. I guess you would call it a laugh.

"I thought of Harry and the team outside, so I said, a little sharp, 'Can I see John?' 'No,' says she—kind of dull like. 'Ain't he home?' says I. Then she looked at me. 'Yes,' says she, 'he's home.' 'Then why can't I see him?' I asked her, out of patience with her now. 'Cause he's dead,' says she, just as quiet and dull—and fell to pleatin' her apron. 'Dead?' says I, like you do when you can't take in what you've heard.

"She just nodded her head, not getting a bit excited, but rockin' back and forth.

" 'Why—where is he?' says I, not knowing *what* to say.

"She just pointed upstairs—like this"—pointing to the room above.

"I got up, with the idea of going up there myself. By this time I—didn't know what to do. I walked from there to here; then I says: 'Why, what did he die of?'

" 'He died of a rope round his neck,' says she; and just went on pleatin' at her apron."

Hale stopped speaking, and stood staring at the rocker, as if he were still seeing the woman who had sat there the morning before. Nobody spoke; it was as if every one were seeing the woman who had sat there the morning before.

"And what did you do then?" the county attorney at last broke the silence.

"I went out and called Harry. I thought I might—need help. I got Harry in, and we went upstairs." His voice fell almost to a whisper. "There he was—lying over the——"

"I think I'd rather have you go into that upstairs," the county attorney interrupted, "where you can point it all out. just go on now with the rest of the story."

"Well, my first thought was to get that rope off. It looked——"

He stopped, his face twitching.

"But Harry, he went up to him, and he said, 'No, he's dead all right, and we'd better not touch anything.' So we went downstairs.

"She was still sitting that same way. 'Has anybody been notified?' I asked. 'No,' says she, unconcerned.

"'Who did this, Mrs. Wright?" said Harry. He said it businesslike, and she stopped pleatin' at her apron. 'I don't know,' she says. 'You don't *know?*' says Harry. 'Weren't you sleepin' in the bed with him?' 'Yes,' says she, 'but I was on the inside.' 'Somebody slipped a rope round his neck and strangled him, and you didn't wake up?' says Harry. 'I didn't wake up,' she said after him.

"We may have looked as if we didn't see how that could be, for after a minute she said, 'I sleep sound.'

"Harry was going to ask her more questions, but I said maybe that weren't our business; maybe we ought to let her tell her story first to the coroner or the sheriff. So Harry went fast as he could over to High Road—the Rivers' place, where there's a telephone."

"And what did she do when she knew you had gone for the coroner?" The attorney got his pencil in his hand all ready for writing.

"She moved from that chair to this one over here"—Hale pointed to a small chair in the corner—"and just sat there with her hands held together and looking down. I got a feeling that I ought to make some conversation, so I said I had come in to see if John wanted to put in a telephone;

and at that she started to laugh, and then she stopped and looked at me—scared."

At sound of a moving pencil the man who was telling the story looked up.

"I dunno—maybe it wasn't scared," he hastened; "I wouldn't like to say it was. Soon Harry got back, and then Dr. Lloyd came, and you, Mr. Peters, and so I guess that's all I know that you don't."

He said that last with relief, and moved a little, as if relaxing. Every one moved a little. The county attorney walked toward the stair door.

"I guess we'll go upstairs first—then out to the barn and around there."

He paused and looked around the kitchen.

"You're convinced there was nothing important here?" he asked the sheriff. "Nothing that would—point to any motive?"

The sheriff too looked all around, as if to re-convince himself.

"Nothing here but kitchen things," he said, with a little laugh for the insignificance of kitchen things.

The county attorney was looking at the cupboard—a peculiar, ungainly structure, half closet and half cupboard, the upper part of it being built in the wall, and the lower part just the old-fashioned kitchen cupboard. As if its queerness attracted him, he got a chair and opened the upper part and looked in. After a moment he drew his hand away sticky.

"Here's a nice mess," he said resentfully.

The two women had drawn nearer, and now the sheriff's wife spoke.

"Oh—her fruit," she said, looking to Mrs. Hale for sympathetic understanding. She turned back to the county attorney and explained: "She worried about that when it turned so cold last night. She said the fire would go out and her jars might burst."

Mrs. Peter's husband broke into a laugh.

"Well, can you beat the women! Held for murder, and worrying about her preserves!"

The young attorney set his lips.

"I guess before we're through with her she may have something more serious than preserves to worry about."

"Oh, well," said Mrs. Hale's husband, with good-natured superiority, "women are used to worrying over trifles."

The two women moved a little closer together. Neither of them spoke. The county attorney seemed suddenly to remember his manners—and think of his future.

"And yet," said he, with the gallantry of a young politician, "for all their worries, what would we do without the ladies?"

The women did not speak, did not unbend. He went to the sink and began washing his hands. He turned to wipe them on the roller towel—whirled it for a cleaner place.

"Dirty towels! Not much of a housekeeper, would you say, ladies?"

He kicked his foot against some dirty pans under the sink.

"There's a great deal of work to be done on a farm," said Mrs. Hale stiffly.

"To be sure. And yet"—with a little bow to her—"I know there are some Dickson County farm-houses that do not have such roller towels." He gave it a pull to expose its full length again.

"Those towels get dirty awful quick. Men's hands aren't always as clean as they might be."

"Ah, loyal to your sex, I see," he laughed. He stopped and gave her a keen look. "But you and Mrs. Wright were neighbors. I suppose you were friends, too."

Martha Hale shook her head.

"I've seen little enough of her of late years. I've not been in this house—it's more than a year."

"And why was that? You didn't like her?"

"I liked her well enough," she replied with spirit. "Far-

mers' wives have their hands full, Mr. Henderson. And then ——" She looked around the kitchen.

"Yes?" he encouraged.

"It never seemed a very cheerful place," said she, more to herself than to him.

"No," he agreed; "I don't think any one would call it cheerful. I shouldn't say she had the home-making instinct."

"Well, I don't know as Wright had, either," she muttered.

"You mean they didn't get on very well?" he was quick to ask.

"No; I don't mean anything," she answered, with decision. As she turned a little away from him, she added: "But I don't think a place would be any the cheerfuller for John Wright's bein' in it."

"I'd like to talk to you about that a little later, Mrs. Hale," he said. "I'm anxious to get the lay of things upstairs now."

He moved toward the stair door, followed by the two men.

"I suppose anything Mrs. Peters does'll be all right?" the sheriff inquired. "She was to take in some clothes for her, you know—and a few little things. We left in such a hurry yesterday."

The county attorney looked at the two women whom they were leaving alone there among the kitchen things.

"Yes—Mrs. Peters," he said, his glance resting on the woman who was not Mrs. Peters the big farmer woman who stood behind the sheriff's wife. "Of course Mrs. Peters is one of us," he said, in a manner of entrusting responsibility. "And keep your eye out, Mrs. Peters, for anything that might be of use. No telling; you women might come upon a clue to the motive—and that's the thing we need."

Mr. Hale rubbed his face after the fashion of a show man getting ready for a pleasantry.

"But would the women know a clue if they did come upon it?" he said; and, having delivered himself of this, he followed the others through the stair door.

The women stood motionless and silent, listening to the footsteps, first upon the stairs, then in the room above them.

Then, as if releasing herself from something strange, Mrs. Hale began to arrange the dirty pans under the sink, which the county attorney's disdainful push of the foot had deranged.

"I'd hate to have men comin' into my kitchen," she said testily—"snoopin' round and criticizin'."

"Of course it's no more than their duty," said the sheriff's wife, in her manner of timid acquiescence.

"Duty's all right," replied Mrs. Hale bluffly; "but I guess that deputy sheriff that come out to make the fire might have got a little of this on." She gave the roller towel a pull. "Wish I'd thought of that sooner! Seems mean to talk about her for not having things slicked up, when she had to come away in such a hurry."

She looked around the kitchen. Certainly it was not "slicked up." Her eye was held by a bucket of sugar on a low shelf. The cover was off the wooden bucket, and beside it was a paper bag—half full.

Mrs. Hale moved toward it.

"She was putting this in there," she said to herself—slowly.

She thought of the flour in her kitchen at home—half sifted, half not sifted. She had been interrupted, and had left things half done. What had interrupted Minnie Foster? Why had that work been left half done? She made a move as if to finish it,—unfinished things always bothered her—and then she glanced around and saw that Mrs. Peters was watching her—and she didn't want Mrs. Peters to get that feeling she had got of work begun and then—for some reason—not finished.

"It's a shame about her fruit," she said, and walked toward the cupboard that the county attorney had opened, and got on the chair, murmuring: "I wonder if it's all gone."

It was a sorry enough looking sight, but "Here's one that's all right," she said at last. She held it toward the light.

"This is cherries, too." She looked again. "I declare I believe that's the only one."

With a sigh, she got down from the chair, went to the sink, and wiped off the bottle.

"She'll feel awful bad, after all her hard work in the hot weather. I remember the afternoon I put up my cherries last summer."

She set the bottle on the table, and, with another sigh, started to sit down in the rocker. But she did not sit down. Something kept her from sitting down in that chair. She straightened—stepped back, and, half turned away, stood looking at it, seeing the woman who had sat there "pleatin' at her apron."

The thin voice of the sheriff's wife broke in upon her: "I must be getting those things from the front room closet." She opened the door into the other room, started in, stepped back. "You coming with me, Mrs. Hale?" she asked nervously. "You—you could help me get them."

They were soon back—the stark coldness of that shut-up room was not a thing to linger in.

"My!" said Mrs. Peters, dropping the things on the table and hurrying to the stove.

Mrs. Hale stood examining the clothes the woman who was being detained in town had said she wanted.

"Wright was close!" she exclaimed, holding up a shabby black skirt that bore the marks of much making over. "I think maybe that's why she kept so much to herself. I s'pose she felt she couldn't do her part; and then, you don't enjoy things when you feel shabby. She used to wear pretty clothes and be lively—when she was Minnie Foster, one of the town girls, singing in the choir. But that—oh, that was twenty years ago."

With a carefulness in which there was something tender, she folded the shabby clothes and piled them at one corner of the table. She looked up at Mrs. Peters, and there was something in the other woman's look that irritated her.

"She don't care," she said to herself. "Much difference it makes to her whether Minnie Foster had pretty clothes when she was a girl."

Then she looked again, and she wasn't so sure; in fact, she hadn't at any time been perfectly sure about Mrs. Peters. She had that shrinking manner, and yet her eyes looked as if they could see a long way into things.

"This all you was to take in?" asked Mrs. Hale.

"No," said the sheriff's wife; "she said she wanted an apron. Funny thing to want," she ventured in her nervous little way, "for there's not much to get you dirty in jail, goodness knows. But I suppose just to make her feel more natural. If you're used to wearing an apron——. She said they were in the bottom drawer of this cupboard. Yes—here they are. And then her little shawl that always hung on the stair door."

She took the small gray shawl from behind the door leading upstairs, and stood a minute looking at it.

Suddenly Mrs. Hale took a quick step toward the other woman.

"Mrs. Peters!"

"Yes, Mrs. Hale?"

"Do you think she—did it?"

A frightened look blurred the other thing in Mrs. Peters' eyes.

"Oh, I don't know," she said, in a voice that seemed to shrink away from the subject.

"Well, I don't think she did," affirmed Mrs. Hale stoutly. "Asking for an apron, and her little shawl. Worryin' about her fruit."

"Mr. Peters says——." Footsteps were heard in the room above; she stopped, looked up, then went on in a lowered voice: "Mr. Peters says—it looks bad for her. Mr. Henderson is awful sarcastic in a speech, and he's going to make fun of her saying she didn't—wake up."

For a moment Mrs. Hale had no answer. Then, "Well,

I guess John Wright didn't wake up—when they was slippin' that rope under his neck," she muttered.

"No, it's *strange,*" breathed Mrs. Peters. "They think it was such a—funny way to kill a man."

She began to laugh; at sound of the laugh, abruptly stopped.

"That's just what Mr. Hale said," said Mrs. Hale, in a resolutely natural voice. "There was a gun in the house. He says that's what he can't understand."

"Mr. Henderson said, coming out, that what was needed for the case was a motive. Something to show anger—or sudden feeling."

"Well, I don't see any signs of anger around here," said Mrs. Hale. "I don't——"

She stopped. It was as if her mind tripped on something. Her eye was caught by a dish-towel in the middle of the kitchen table. Slowly she moved toward the table. One half of it was wiped clean, the other half messy. Her eyes made a slow, almost unwilling turn to the bucket of sugar and the half empty bag beside it. Things begun—and not finished.

After a moment she stepped back, and said, in that manner of releasing herself:

"Wonder how they're finding things upstairs? I hope she had it a little more red up there. You know,"—she paused, and feeling gathered,—"it seems kind of *sneaking:* locking her up in town and coming out here to get her own house to turn against her!"

"But, Mrs. Hale," said the sheriff's wife, "the law is the law."

"I s'pose 'tis," answered Mrs. Hale shortly.

She turned to the stove, saying something about that fire not being much to brag of. She worked with it a minute, and when she straightened up she said aggressively:

"The law is the law—and a bad stove is a bad stove. How'd you like to cook on this?"—pointing with the poker to the broken lining. She opened the oven door and started to express her opinion of the oven; but she was swept into

her own thoughts, thinking of what it would mean, year after year, to have that stove to wrestle with. The thought of Minnie Foster trying to bake in that oven—and the thought of her never going over to see Minnie Foster——.

She was startled by hearing Mrs. Peters say: "A person gets discouraged—and loses heart."

The sheriff's wife had looked from the stove to the sink —to the pail of water which had been carried in from outside. The two women stood there silent, above them the footsteps of the men who were looking for evidence against the woman who had worked in that kitchen. That look of seeing into things, of seeing through a thing to something else, was in the eyes of the sheriff's wife now. When Mrs. Hale next spoke to her, it was gently:

"Better loosen up your things, Mrs. Peters. We'll not feel them when we go out."

Mrs. Peters went to the back of the room to hang up the fur tippet she was wearing. A moment later she exclaimed, "Why, she was piecing a quilt," and held up a large sewing basket piled high with quilt pieces.

Mrs. Hale spread some of the blocks out on the table.

"It's log-cabin pattern," she said, putting several of them together. "Pretty, isn't it?"

They were so engaged with the quilt that they did not hear the footsteps on the stairs. Just as the stair door opened Mrs. Hale was saying:

"Do you suppose she was going to quilt it or just knot it?"

The sheriff threw up his hands.

"They wonder whether she was going to quilt it or just knot it!"

There was a laugh for the ways of women, a warming of hands over the stove, and then the county attorney said briskly:

"Well, let's go right out to the barn and get that cleared up."

"I don't see as there's anything so strange," Mrs. Hale

said resentfully, after the outside door had closed on the three men—"our taking up our time with little things while we're waiting for them to get the evidence. I don't see as it's anything to laugh about."

"Of course they've got awful important things on their minds," said the sheriff's wife apologetically.

They returned to an inspection of the block for the quilt. Mrs. Hale was looking at the fine, even sewing, and preoccupied with thoughts of the woman who had done that sewing, when she heard the sheriff's wife say, in a queer tone:

"Why, look at this one."

She turned to take the block held out to her.

"The sewing," said Mrs. Peters, in a troubled way. "All the rest of them have been so nice and even—but—this one. Why, it looks as if she didn't know what she was about!"

Their eyes met—something flashed to life, passed between them; then, as if with an effort, they seemed to pull away from each other. A moment Mrs. Hale sat there, her hands folded over that sewing which was so unlike all the rest of the sewing. Then she had pulled a knot and drawn the threads.

"Oh, what are you doing, Mrs. Hale?" asked the sheriff's wife, startled.

"Just pulling out a stitch or two that's not sewed very good," said Mrs. Hale mildly.

"I don't think we ought to touch things," Mrs. Peters said, a little helplessly.

"I'll just finish up this end," answered Mrs. Hale, still in that mild, matter-of-fact fashion.

She threaded a needle and started to replace bad sewing with good. For a little while she sewed in silence. Then, in that thin, timid voice, she heard:

"Mrs. Hale!"

"Yes, Mrs. Peters?"

"What do you suppose she was so—nervous about?"

"Oh, *I* don't know, said Mrs. Hale, as if dismissing a thing not important enough to spend much time on. "I don't know

as she was—nervous. I sew awful queer sometimes when I'm just tired."

She cut a thread, and out of the corner of her eye looked up at Mrs. Peters. The small, lean face of the sheriff's wife seemed to have tightened up. Her eyes had that look of peering into something. But next moment she moved, and said in her thin, indecisive way:

"Well, I must get those clothes wrapped. They may be through sooner than we think. I wonder where I could find a piece of paper—and string."

"In that cupboard, maybe," suggested Mrs. Hale, after a glance around.

One piece of the crazy sewing remained unripped. Mrs. Peters' back turned, Martha Hale now scrutinized that piece, compared it with the dainty, accurate sewing of the other blocks. The difference was startling. Holding this block made her feel queer, as if the distracted thoughts of the woman who had perhaps turned to it to try and quiet herself were communicating themselves to her.

Mrs. Peters' voice roused her.

"Here's a bird-cage," she said. "Did she have a bird, Mrs. Hale?"

"Why, I don't know whether she did or not." She turned to look at the cage Mrs. Peters was holding up. "I've not been here in so long." She sighed. "There was a man round last year selling canaries cheap—but I don't know as she took one. Maybe she did. She used to sing real pretty herself."

Mrs. Peters looked around the kitchen.

"Seems kind of funny to think of a bird here." She half laughed—an attempt to put up a barrier. "But she must have had one—or why would she have a cage? I wonder what happened to it."

"I suppose maybe the cat got it," suggested Mrs. Hale, resuming her sewing.

"No; she didn't have a cat. She's got that feeling some people have about cats—being afraid of them. When they brought her to our house yesterday, my cat got in the room, and she was real upset and asked me to take it out."

"My sister Bessie was like that," laughed Mrs. Hale.

The sheriff's wife did not reply. The silence made Mrs. Hale turn round. Mrs. Peters was examining the bird-cage.

"Look at this door," she said slowly. "It's broke. One hinge has been pulled apart."

Mrs. Hale came nearer.

"Looks as if some one must have been—rough with it."

Again their eyes met—startled, questioning, apprehensive. For a moment neither spoke nor stirred. Then Mrs. Hale, turning away, said brusquely:

"If they're going to find any evidence, I wish they'd be about it. I don't like this place."

"But I'm awful glad you came with me, Mrs. Hale." Mrs. Peters put the bird-cage on the table and sat down. "It would be lonesome for me—sitting here alone."

"Yes, it would, wouldn't it?" agreed Mrs. Hale, a certain determined naturalness in her voice. She had picked up the sewing, but now it dropped in her lap, and she murmured in a different voice: "But I tell you what I *do* wish, Mrs. Peters. I wish I had come over sometimes when she was here. I wish—I had."

"But of course you were awful busy, Mrs. Hale. Your house—and your children."

"I could've come," retorted Mrs. Hale shortly. "I stayed away because it weren't cheerful—and that's why I ought to have come. I"—she looked around—"I've never liked this place. Maybe because it's down in a hollow and you don't see the road. I don't know what it is, but it's a lonesome place, and always was. I wish I had come over to see Minnie Foster sometimes. I can see now——" She did not put it into words.

"Well, you mustn't reproach yourself," counseled Mrs. Peters. "Somehow, we just don't see how it is with other folks till—something comes up."

"Not having children makes less work," mused Mrs. Hale, after a silence, "but it makes a quiet house—and Wright out to work all day—and no company when he did come in. Did you know John Wright, Mrs. Peters?"

"Not to know him. I've seen him in town. They say he was a good man."

"Yes—good," conceded John Wright's neighbor grimly. "He didn't drink, and kept his word as well as most, I guess, and paid his debts. But he was a hard man, Mrs. Peters. Just to pass the time of day with him——." She stopped, shivered a little. "Like a raw wind that gets to the bone." Her eye fell upon the cage on the table before her, and she added, almost bitterly: "I should think she would've wanted a bird!"

Suddenly she leaned forward, looking intently at the cage. "But what do you s'pose went wrong with it?"

"I don't know," returned Mrs. Peters; "unless it got sick and died."

But after she said it she reached over and swung the broken door. Both women watched it as if somehow held by it.

"You didn't know—her?" Mrs. Hale asked, a gentler note in her voice.

"Not till they brought her yesterday," said the sheriff's wife.

"She—come to think of it, she was kind of like a bird herself. Real sweet and pretty, but kind of timid and—fluttery. How—she—did—change."

That held her for a long time. Finally, as if struck with a happy thought and relieved to get back to everyday things, she exclaimed:

"Tell you what, Mrs. Peters, why don't you take the quilt in with you? It might take up her mind."

"Why, I think that's a real nice idea, Mrs. Hale," agreed

the sheriff's wife, as if she too were glad to come into the atmosphere of a simple kindness. "There couldn't possibly be any objection to that, could there? Now, just what will I take? I wonder if her patches are in here—and her things."

They turned to the sewing basket.

"Here's some red," said Mrs. Hale, bringing out a roll of cloth. Underneath that was a box. "Here, maybe her scissors are in here—and her things." She held it up. "What a pretty box! I'll warrant that was something she had a long time ago—when she was a girl."

She held it in her hand a moment; then, with a little sigh, opened it.

Instantly her hand went to her nose.

"Why——!"

Mrs. Peters drew nearer—then turned away.

"There's something wrapped up in this piece of silk," faltered Mrs. Hale.

"This isn't her scissors," said Mrs. Peters, in a shrinking voice.

Her hand not steady, Mrs. Hale raised the piece of silk. "Oh, Mrs. Peters!" she cried. "it's——"

Mrs. Peters bent closer.

"It's the bird," she whispered.

"But, Mrs. Peters!" cried Mrs. Hale. "*Look* at it! Its *neck*—look at its neck! It's all—other side *to*."

She held the box away from her.

The sheriff's wife again bent closer.

"Somebody wrung its neck," said she, in a voice that was slow and deep.

And then again the eyes of the two women met—this time clung together in a look of dawning comprehension, of growing horror. Mrs. Peters looked from the dead bird to the broken door of the cage. Again their eyes met. And just then there was a sound at the outside door.

Mrs. Hale slipped the box under the quilt pieces in the basket, and sank into the chair before it. Mrs. Peters stood

holding to the table. The county attorney and the sheriff came in from outside.

"Well, ladies," said the county attorney, as one turning from serious things to little pleasantries, "have you decided whether she was going to quilt it or knot it?"

"We think," began the sheriff's wife in a flurried voice, "that she was going to—knot it."

He was too preoccupied to notice the change that came in her voice on that last.

"Well, that's very interesting, I'm sure," he said tolerantly. He caught sight of the bird-cage. "Has the bird flown?"

"We think the cat got it," said Mrs. Hale in a voice curiously even.

He was walking up and down, as if thinking something out.

"Is there a cat?" he asked absently.

Mrs. Hale shot a look up at the sheriff's wife.

"Well, not *now*," said Mrs. Peters. "They're superstitious, you know; they leave."

She sank into her chair.

The county attorney did not heed her. "No sign at all of any one having come in from the outside," he said to Peters, in the manner of continuing an interrupted conversation. "Their own rope. Now let's go upstairs again and go over it, piece by piece. It would have to have been some one who knew just the——"

The stair door closed behind them and their voices were lost.

The two women sat motionless, not looking at each other, but as if peering into something and at the same time holding back. When they spoke now it was as if they were afraid of what they were saying, but as if they could not help saying it.

"She liked the bird," said Martha Hale, low and slowly. "She was going to bury it in that pretty box."

"When I was a girl," said Mrs. Peters, under her breath, "my kitten—there was a boy took a hatchet, and before my eyes—before I could get there——" She covered her face an instant. "If they hadn't held me back I would have"—she caught herself, looked upstairs where footsteps were heard, and finished weakly—"hurt him."

Then they sat without speaking or moving.

"I wonder how it would seem," Mrs. Hale at last began, as if feeling her way over strange ground—"never to have had any children around?" Her eyes made a slow sweep of the kitchen, as if seeing what that kitchen had meant through all the years. "No, Wright wouldn't like the bird," she said after that—"a thing that sang. She used to sing. He killed that too." Her voice tightened.

Mrs. Peters moved uneasily.

"Of course we don't know who killed the bird."

"I knew John Wright," was Mrs. Hale's answer.

"It was an awful thing was done in this house that night, Mrs. Hale," said the sheriff's wife. "Killing a man while he slept—slipping a thing round his neck that choked the life out of him."

Mrs. Hale's hand went out to the bird-cage.

"His neck. Choked the life out of him."

"We don't *know* who killed him," whispered Mrs. Peters wildly. "We don't *know*."

Mrs. Hale had not moved. "If there had been years and years of—nothing, then a bird to sing to you, it would be awful—still—after the bird was still."

It was as if something within her not herself had spoken, and it found in Mrs. Peters something she did not know as herself.

"I know what stillness is," she said, in a queer, monotonous voice. "When we homesteaded in Dakota, and my first baby died—after he was two years old—and me with no other then——"

Mrs. Hale stirred.

"How soon do you suppose they'll be through looking for the evidence?"

"I know what stillness is," repeated Mrs. Peters, in just that same way. Then she too pulled back. "The law has got to punish crime, Mrs. Hale," she said in her tight little way.

"I wish you'd seen Minnie Foster," was the answer, "when she wore a white dress with blue ribbons, and stood up there in the choir and sang."

The picture of that girl, the fact that she had lived neighbor to that girl for twenty years, and had let her die for lack of life, was suddenly more than she could bear.

"Oh, I *wish* I'd come over here once in a while!" she cried. "That was a crime! That was a crime! Who's going to punish that?"

"We mustn't take on," said Mrs. Peters, with a frightened look toward the stairs.

"I might 'a' *known* she needed help! I tell you, it's *queer,* Mrs. Peters. We live close together, and we live far apart. We all go through the same things—it's all just a different kind of the same thing! If it weren't—why do you and I *understand?* Why do we *know*—what we know this minute?"

She dashed her hand across her eyes. Then, seeing the jar of fruit on the table, she reached for it and choked out:

"If I was you I wouldn't *tell* her her fruit was gone! Tell her it *ain't.* Tell her it's all right—all of it. Here—take this in to prove it to her! She—she may never know whether it was broke or not."

She turned away.

Mrs. Peters reached out for the bottle of fruit as if she were glad to take it—as if touching a familiar thing, having something to do, could keep her from something else. She got up, looked about for something to wrap the fruit in, took a petticoat from the pile of clothes she had brought from the

front room, and nervously started winding that round the bottle.

"My!" she began, in a high, false voice, "it's a good thing the men couldn't hear us! Getting all stirred up over a little thing like a—dead canary." She hurried over that. "As if that could have anything to do with—with—— My wouldn't they *laugh?*"

Footsteps were heard on the stairs.

"Maybe they would," muttered Mrs. Hale—"maybe they wouldn't."

"No, Peters," said the county attorney incisively; "it's all perfectly clear, except the reason for doing it. But you know juries when it comes to women. If there was some definite thing—something to show. Something to make a story about. A thing that would connect up with this clumsy way of doing it."

In a covert way Mrs. Hale looked at Mrs. Peters. Mrs. Peters was looking at her. Quickly they looked away from each other. The outer door opened and Mr. Hale came in.

"I've got the team round now," he said. "Pretty cold out there."

"I'm going to stay here awhile by myself," the county attorney suddenly announced. "You can send Frank out for me, can't you?" he asked the sheriff. "I want to go over everything. I'm not satisfied we can't do better."

Again, for one brief moment, the two women's eyes found one another.

The sheriff came up to the table.

"Did you want to see what Mrs. Peters was going to take in?"

The county attorney picked up the apron. He laughed.

"Oh, I guess they're not very dangerous things the ladies have picked out."

Mrs. Hale's hand was on the sewing basket in which the box was concealed. She felt that she ought to take her hand

off the basket. She did not seem able to. He picked up one of the quilt blocks which she had piled on to cover the box. Her eyes felt like fire. She had a feeling that if he took up the basket she would snatch it from him.

But he did not take it up. With another little laugh, he turned away, saying:

"No; Mrs. Peters doesn't need supervising. For that matter, a sheriff's wife is married to the law. Ever think of it that way, Mrs. Peters?"

Mrs. Peters was standing beside the table. Mrs. Hale shot a look up at her; but she could not see her face. Mrs. Peters had turned away. When she spoke, her voice was muffled.

"Not—just that way," she said.

"Married to the law!" chuckled Mrs. Peters' husband. He moved toward the door into the front room, and said to the county attorney:

"I just want you to come in here a minute, George. We ought to take a look at these windows."

"Oh—windows," said the county attorney scoffingly.

"We'll be right out, Mr. Hale," said the sheriff to the farmer, who was still waiting by the door.

Hale went to look after the horses. The sheriff followed the county attorney into the other room. Again—for one final moment—the two women were alone in that kitchen.

Martha Hale sprang up, her hands tight together, looking at that other woman, with whom it rested. At first she could not see her eyes, for the sheriff's wife had not turned back since she turned away at that suggestion of being married to the law. But now Mrs. Hale made her turn back. Her eyes made her turn back. Slowly, unwillingly, Mrs. Peters turned her head until her eyes met the eyes of the other woman. There was a moment when they held each other in a steady, burning look in which there was no evasion nor flinching. Then Martha Hale's eyes pointed the way to the basket in which was hidden the thing that would make certain the conviction of the other woman—that woman who was

not there and yet who had been there with them all through that hour.

For a moment Mrs. Peters did not move. And then she did it. With a rush forward, she threw back the quilt pieces, got the box, tried to put it in her handbag. It was too big. Desperately she opened it, started to take the bird out. But there she broke—she could not touch the bird. She stood there helpless, foolish.

There was the sound of a knob turning in the inner door. Martha Hale snatched the box from the sheriff's wife, and got it in the pocket of her big coat just as the sheriff and the county attorney came back into the kitchen.

"Well, Henry," said the county attorney facetiously, "at least we found out that she was not going to quilt it. She was going to—what is you call it, ladies?"

Mrs. Hale's hand was against the pocket of her coat.

"We call it—knot it, Mr. Henderson."

Reading List

Stories of Plot: Problem

Alsop, G. F. "The Kitchen Gods" (*Prize Stories of 1919*).
Balzac, Honoré de. "La Grande Breteche," "Doomed to Live."
Beach, Rex. "Running Elk."
Bercovici, Konrad. "Hazi, Wife of Sender Surtuck."
Brown, Alice. "The Wedding Ring."
Burt, Maxwell Struthers. "A Cup of Tea," "The Water-Hole."
Canfield, Dorothy. "An Academic Question."
Comer, Cornelia. "The Preliminaries."
Coppée, François. "The Substitute."
Davis, Richard Harding. "The Other Woman," "The Unfinished Story."
Dwight, H. G. "In the Pasha's Garden."
Ferber, Edna. "The Woman Who Tried to be Good," "Sophy as She Might Have Been."
Foote, John Taintor. "The Bolters," "Goldie May and the Faithful Servant."
Garland, Hamlin. "A Branch Road," "Up the Coolly."

GEROULD, KATHERINE. "Vain Oblations," "The Knight's Move" (O'Brien's *Best Short Stories of 1917*).
GORKY, MAXIM. "Twenty-six Men and a Girl."
HENRY, O. "An Unfinished Story."
HERRICK, ROBERT. "The Master of the Inn."
LAGERLÖF, SELMA. "The Girl from Marsh Croft."
LONDON, JACK. "A Day's Lodging," "The Kanaka Surf," "South of the Slot."
MORRIS, GOUVERNEUR. "The Claws of the Tiger."
PARKER, GILBERT. "A Lodging in the Wilderness," "Qu'Appelle?"
POST, MELVILLE D. "The Stolen Life."
SHORE, VIOLA B. "Mary Mary."
STOCKTON, FRANK. "The Lady or the Tiger?"
WHARTON, EDITH. "The Duchess at Prayer," "Ethan Frome."
WHITE, WILLIAM ALLEN. "A Social Rectangle."
WIDDEMER, MARGARET. "Good Times," "The Congregation."

HUMORESQUE *

By Fannie Hurst

On either side of the Bowery, which cuts through like a drain to catch its sewage, Every Man's Land, a reeking march of humanity and humidity, steams with the excrement of seventeen languages, flung in *patois* from tenement windows, fire-escapes, curbs, stoops, and cellars whose walls are terrible and spongy with fungi.

By that impregnable chemistry of race whereby the red blood of the Mongolian and the red blood of the Caucasian become as oil and water in the mingling, Mulberry Street, bounded by sixteen languages, runs its intact Latin length of push-carts, clothes-lines, naked babies, drying vermicelli; black-eyed women in rhinestone combs and perennially big with child; whole families of buttonhole-makers, who first saw the blue-and-gold light of Sorrento, bent at home work round a single gas flare; pomaded barbers of a thousand Neapolitan amours. And then, just as suddenly, almost without osmosis and by the mere stepping down from the curb, Mulberry becomes Mott Street, hung in grill-work balconies, the moldy smell of poverty touched up with incense. Orientals whose feet shuffle and whose faces are carved out of satinwood. Forbidden women, their white, drugged faces behind upper windows. Yellow children, incongruous enough in Western clothing. A draughty areaway with an oblique of gaslight and a black well of descending staircase. Show-windows of jade and tea and Chinese porcelains.

* From *Humoresque;* copyright, 1919, by Harper & Brothers. Reprinted by permission of the author and the publishers.

More streets emanating out from Mott like a handful of crooked rheumatic fingers, then suddenly the Bowery again, cowering beneath Elevated trains, where men burned down to the butt end of soiled lives pass in and out and out and in of the knee-high swinging doors, a veiny-nosed, acid-eaten race in themselves.

Allen Street, too, still more easterly, and half as wide, is straddled its entire width by the steely, long-legged skeleton of Elevated traffic, so that its third-floor windows no sooner shudder into silence from the rushing shock of one train than they are shaken into chatter by the passage of another. Indeed, third-floor dwellers of Allen Street, reaching out, can almost touch the serrated edges of the Elevated structure, and in summer the smell of its hot rails becomes an actual taste in the mouth. Passengers, in turn, look in upon this horizontal of life as they whiz by. Once, in fact, the blurry figure of what might have been a woman leaned out, as she passed, to toss into one Abrahm Kantor's apartment a short-stemmed pink carnation. It hit softly on little Leon Kantor's crib, brushing him fragrantly across the mouth and causing him to pucker up.

Beneath, where even in August noonday, the sun cannot find its way by a chink, and babies lie stark naked in the cavernous shade, Allen Street presents a sort of submarine and greenish gloom, as if its humanity were actually moving through a sea of aqueous shadows, faces rather bleached and shrunk. And then, like a shimmering background of orange-finned and copper-flanked marine life, the brass-shops of Allen Street, whole rows of them, burn flamelessly and without benefit of fuel.

To enter Abrahm Kantor's—Brasses, was three steps down, so that his casement show-window, at best filmed over with the constant rain of dust ground down from the rails above, was obscure enough, but crammed with copied loot of khedive and of czar. The seven-branch candlestick so biblical and supplicating of arms. An urn, shaped like Rebecca's, of brass,

all beaten over with little pocks. Things—cups, trays, knockers, ikons, gargoyles, bowls, and teapots. A symphony of bells in graduated sizes. Jardinières with fat sides. A pot-bellied samovar. A swinging-lamp for the dead, star-shaped. Against the door, an octave of tubular chimes, prisms of voiceless harmony and of heatless light.

Opening this door, they rang gently, like melody heard through water and behind glass. Another bell rang, too, in tilted singsong from a pully operating somewhere in the catacomb rear of this lambent vale of things and things and things. In turn, this pulley set in toll still another bell, two flights up in Abrahm Kantor's tenement, which overlooked the front of whizzing rails and a rear wilderness of gibbet-looking clothes-lines, dangling perpetual specters of flapping union suits in a mid-air flaky with soot.

Often at lunch, or even the evening meal, this bell would ring in on Abrahm Kantor's digestive well-being, and while he hurried down, napkin often bib-fashion still about his neck, and into the smouldering lanes of copper, would leave an eloquent void at the head of his well-surrounded table.

This bell was ringing now, jingling in upon the slumber of a still newer Kantor, snuggling peacefully enough within the ammoniac depths of a cradle recently evacuated by Leon, heretofore impinged upon you.

On her knees before an oven that billowed forth hotly into her face, Mrs. Kantor, fairly fat and not yet forty, and at the immemorial task of plumbing a delicately swelling layer-cake with broom-straw, raised her face, reddened and faintly moist.

"Isadore, run down and say your papa is out until six. If it's a customer, remember the first asking-price is the two middle figures on the tag, and the last asking-price is the two outside figures. See once, with your papa out to buy your little brother his birthday present, and your mother in a cake, if you can't make a sale for first price."

Isadore Kantor, aged eleven and hunched with a younger

Kantor over an oilcloth-covered table, hunched himself still deeper in a barter for a large crystal marble with a candy stripe down its center.

"Izzie, did you hear me?"

"Yes'm."

"Go down this minute—do you hear? Rudolph, stop always letting your big brother get the best of you in marbles. Iz-zie!"

"In-a-minute."

"Don't let me have to ask you again, Isadore Kantor!"

"Aw, ma, I got some 'rithmetic to do. Let Esther go!"

"Always Esther! Your sister stays right in the front room with her spelling."

"Aw, ma, I got spelling, too."

"Every time I ask that boy he should do me one thing, right away he gets lessons! With me, that lessons-talk don't go no more. Every time you get put down in school, I'm surprised there's a place left lower where they can put you. Working-papers for such a boy like you!"

"I'll woik——"

"How I worried myself! Violin lessons yet—thirty cents a lesson out of your papa's pants while he slept! That's how I wanted to have in the family a profession—maybe a musician on the violin! Lessons for you out of money I had to lie to your papa about! Honest, when I think of it—my own husband—it's a wonder I don't potch you just for remembering it. Rudolph, will you stop licking that cake-pan? It's saved for your little brother Leon. Ain't you ashamed even on your little brother's birthday to steal from him?"

"Ma, gimme the spoon?"

"I'll give you the spoon, Isadore Kantor, where you don't want it. If you don't hurry down, the way that bell is ringing, not one bite do you get out of your little brother's birthday-cake to-night!"

"I'm goin', ain't I?"

"Always on my children's birthdays a meanness sets into

this house! Ru-dolph, will you put down that bowl! Iz-zie —for the last time I ask you—for the last time——"

Erect now, Mrs. Kantor lifted an expressive hand, letting it hover.

"I'm goin', ma; for golly sakes, I'm goin'!" said her recalcitrant one, shuffling off toward the staircase, shuffling, shuffling.

Then Mrs. Kantor resumed her plumbing, and through the little apartment, its middle and only bedroom of three beds and a crib lighted vicariously by the front room and kitchen, began to wind the warm, the golden-brown fragrance of cake in the rising.

By six o'clock the shades were drawn against the dirty dusk of Allen Street and the oilcloth-covered table dragged out center and spread by Esther Kantor, nine in years, in the sturdy little legs bulging over shoe-tops, in the pink cheeks that sagged slightly of plumpness, and in the utter roundness of face and gaze, but mysteriously older in the little-mother lore of crib and knee-dandling ditties and in the ropy length and thickness of the two brown plaits down her back.

There was an eloquence to that waiting, laid-out table, the print of the family already gathered about it; the dynastic high chair, throne of each succeeding Kantor; an armchair drawn up before the paternal mustache-cup; the ordinary kitchen chair of Mannie Kantor, who spilled things, an oilcloth sort of bib dangling from its back; the little chair of Leon Kantor, cushioned in an old family album that raised his chin above the table. Even in cutlery the Kantor family was not lacking in variety. Surrounding a centerpiece of thick Russian lace were Russian spoons washed in washed-off gilt; forks of one, two, and three tines; steel knives with black handles; a hartshorn carving-knife. Thick-lipped china in stacks before the armchair. A round four-pound loaf of black bread waiting to be torn, and to-night, on the festive mat of cotton lace, a cake of pinkly gleaming icing, encircled with five pink little candles.

At slightly after six Abrahm Kantor returned, leading by a resisting wrist Leon Kantor, his stemlike little legs, hit midship, at it were, by not sufficiently cut-down trousers and so narrow and birdlike of face that his eyes quite obliterated the remaining map of his features, like those of a still wet nestling. All except his ears. They poised at the sides of Leon's shaved head of black bristles, as if butterflies had just lighted there, whispering, with very spread wings, their message, and presently would fly off again. By some sort of muscular contraction he could wiggle these ears at will, and would do so for a penny or a whistle, and upon one occasion for his brother Rudolph's dead rat, so devised as to dangle from string and window before the unhappy passer-by. They were quivering now, these ears, but because the entire little face was twitching back tears and gulp of sobs.

"Abrahm—Leon—what is it?" Her hands and her forearms instantly out from the business of kneading something meaty and floury, Mrs. Kantor rushed forward, her glance quick from one to the other of them. "Abrahm, what's wrong?"

"I'll feedle him! I'll feedle him!"

The little pulling wrist still in clutch, Mr. Kantor regarded his wife, the lower half of his face, well covered with reddish bristles, undershot, his free hand and even his eyes violently lifted. To those who see in a man a perpetual kinship to that animal kingdom of which he is supreme, there was something undeniably anthropoidal about Abrahm Kantor, a certain simian width between the eyes and long, rather agile hands with hairy backs.

"Hush it!" cried Mr. Kantor, his free hand raised in threat of descent, and cowering his small son to still more undersized proportions. "Hush it or by golly! "I'll——"

"Abrahm—Abrahm—what is it?"

Then Mr. Kantor gave vent in acridity of word and feature. *"Schlemmil"* he cried. *"Momser! Ganef! Nebich!"* by which, in smiting mother tongue, he branded his offspring

with attributes of apostate and ne'er-do-well, of idiot and thief.

"Abrahm!"

"Schlemmil!" repeated Mr. Kantor, swinging Leon so that he described a large semicircle that landed him into the meaty and waiting embrace of his mother. "Take him! You should be proud of such a little *momser* for a son! Take him, and here you got back his birthday dollar. A feedle! Honest—when I think on it—a feedle!"

Such a rush of outrage seemed fairly to strangle Mr. Kantor that he stood, hand still upraised, choking and inarticulate above the now frankly howling huddle of his son.

"Abrahm, you should just once touch this child! How he trembles! Leon—mamma's baby—what is it? Is this how you come back when papa takes you out to buy your birthday present? Ain't you ashamed?"

Mouth distended to a large and blackly hollow O, Leon, between terrifying spells of breath-holding, continued to howl.

"All the way to Naftel's toy-store I drag him. A birthday present for a dollar his mother wants he should have, all right, a birthday present! I give you my word till I'm ashamed for Naftel, every toy in his shelves is pulled down. Such a cow—that shakes with his head——"

"No—no—no!" This from young Leon, beating at his mother's skirts.

Again the upraised but never quite descending hand of his father.

"By golly! I'll 'no—no' you!"

"Abrahm—go 'way! Baby, what did papa do?"

Then Mr. Kantor broke into an actual tarantella of rage, his hands palms up and dancing.

"'What did papa do?' she asks. She's got easy asking. 'What did papa do?' The whole shop, I tell you. A sheep with a baa inside when you squeeze on him—games—a horn so he can holler my head off—such a knife like Izzie's with a scissors in it. 'Leon,' I said, ashamed for Naftel, 'that's a

fine knife like Izzie's so you can cut up with. All right, then'—when I see how he hollers—'such a box full of soldiers to have war with.' 'Dollar seventy-five,' says Naftel. 'All right, then,' I says, when I seen how he keeps hollering. 'Give you a dollar fifteen for 'em.' I should make myself small for fifteen cents more. 'Dollar fifteen,' I says—anything so he should shut up with his hollering for what he seen in the window."

"He seen something in the window he wanted, Abrahm?"

"Didn't I tell you? A feedle! A four-dollar feedle! A moosicer, so we should have another feedler in the family for some thirty-cents lessons."

"Abrahm—you mean—Le—our Leon—wanted a violin?"

" 'Wanted,' she says. I could potch him again this minute for how he wanted it! *Du*—you little bum you—*chammer—momser*—I'll feedle you!"

Across Mrs. Kantor's face, as she knelt there in the shapeless cotton-stuff uniform of poverty, through the very tenement of her body, a light had flashed up into her eyes. She drew her son closer, crushing his puny cheek up against hers, cupping his bristly little head in her by no means immaculate palms.

"He wanted a violin! It's come, Abrahm! The dream of all my life—my prayers—it's come! I knew it must be one of my children if I waited long enough—and prayed enough. A musician! He wants a violin! He cried for a violin! My baby! Why, darlink, mamma'll sell her clothes off her back to get you a violin. He's a musician, Abrahm! I should have known it the way he's fooling always around the chimes and the bells in the store!"

Then Mr. Kantor took to rocking his head between his palms.

"Oi—oi! The mother is crazier as her son. A moosician! A *fresser,* you mean. Such an eater, it's a wonder he ain't twice too big instead of twice too little for his age."

"That's a sign, Abrahm; geniuses, they all eat big. For

all we know, he's a genius. I swear to you, Abrahm, all the months before he was born I prayed for it. Each one before they came, I prayed it should be the one. I thought that time the way our Isadore ran after the organ-grinder he would be the one. How could I know it was the monkey he wanted? When Isadore wouldn't take to it I prayed my next one, and then my next one, should have the talent. I've prayed for it, Abrahm. If he wants a violin, please, he should have it."

"Not with my money."

"With mine! I've got enough saved, Abrahm. Them three extra dollars right here inside my own waist. Just that much for that cape down on Grand street. I wouldn't have it now, the way they say the wind blows up them——"

"I tell you the woman's crazy-——"

"I feel it! I know he's got talent! I know my children so well. A—a father don't understand. I'm so next to them. It's like I can tell always everything that will happen to them —it's like a pain--somewheres here—like in back of my heart."

"A pain in the heart she gets."

"For my own children I'm always a prophet, I tell you! You think I didn't know that—that terrible night after the pogrom after we got out of Kief to across the border! You remember, Abrahm, how I predicted it to you then—how our Mannie would be born too soon and—and not right from my suffering! Did it happen on the ship to America just the way I said it would? Did it happen just exactly how I predicted our Izzie would break his leg that time playing on the fire-escape? I tell you, Abrahm, I get a real pain here under my heart that tells me what comes to my children. Didn't I tell you how Esther would be the first in her confirmation-class and our baby Boris would be red-headed? At only five years, our Leon all by himself cries for a fiddle—get it for him, Abrahm—get it for him!"

"I tell you, Sarah, I got a crazy woman for a wife! It

ain't enough we celebrate eight birthdays a year with one-dollar presents each time and copper goods every day higher. It ain't enough that right to-morrow I got a fifty-dollar note over me from Sol Ginsberg; a four-dollar present she wants for a child that don't even know the name of a feedle."

"Leon, baby, stop hollering. Papa will go back and get the fiddle for you now before supper. See, mamma's got money here in her waist——"

"Papa will go back for the feedle *not*—three dollars she's saved for herself he can holler out of her for a feedle!"

"Abrahm, he's screaming so he—he'll have a fit."

"He should have two fits."

"Darlink——"

"I tell you the way you spoil your children it will some day come back on us."

"It's his birthday night, Abrahm—five years since his little head first lay on the pillow next to me."

"All right—all right—drive me crazy because he's got a birthday."

"Leon baby—if you don't stop hollering you'll make yourself sick. Abrahm, I never saw him like this—he's green——"

"I'll green him. Where is that old feedle from Isadore—that seventy-five-cents one?"

"I never thought of that! You broke it that time you got mad at Isadore's lessons. I'll run down. Maybe it's with the junk behind the store. I never thought of that fiddle. Leon darlink—wait! Mamma'll run down and look. Wait, Leon, till mamma finds you a fiddle."

The raucous screams stopped then, suddenly, and on their very lustiest crest, leaving an echoing gash across silence. On willing feet of haste Mrs. Kantor wound down backward the high, ladder-like staircase that led to the brass-shop.

Meanwhile to a gnawing consciousness of dinner-hour had assembled the house of Kantor. Attuned to the intimate atmosphere of the tenement which is so constantly rent with

cry of child, child-bearing, delirium, delirium tremens, Leon Kantor had howled no impression into the motley din of things. There were Isadore, already astride his chair, leaning well into center table, for first vociferous tear at the four-pound loaf; Esther, old at chores, settling an infant into the high chair, careful of tiny fingers in lowering the wooden bib.

"Papa, Izzie's eating first again."

"Put down that loaf and wait until your mother dishes up, or you'll get a potch you won't soon forget."

"Say, pop——"

"Don't 'say, pop' me! I don't want no street-bum freshness from you!"

"I mean, papa, there was an up-town swell in, and she bought one of them seventy-five-cent candle-sticks for the first price."

"Schlemmil! Chammer!" said Mr. Kantor, rinsing his hands at the sink. "Didn't I always tell you it's the first price, times two, when you see up-town business come in? Haven't I learned it to you, often enough a slummer must pay for her nosiness?"

There entered then, on poor, shuffling feet, Mannie Kantor, so marred in the mysterious and ceramic process of life that the brain and the soul had stayed back sooner than inhabit him. Seventeen in years, in the down upon his face and in growth unretarded by any great nervosity of system, his vacuity of face was not that of childhood, but rather as if his light eyes were peering out from some hinterland and wanting so terribly and so dumbly to communicate what they beheld to brain-cells closed against himself.

At sight of Mannie, Leon Kantor, the tears still wetly and dirtily down his cheeks, left off his black, fierce-eyed stare of waiting long enough to smile, darkly, it is true, but sweetly.

"Giddy-app!" he cried. "Giddy-app!"

And then Mannie, true to habit, would scamper and scamper.

Up out of the traplike stair-opening came the head of Mrs. Kantor, disheveled and a smudge of soot across her face, but beneath her arm, triumphant, a violin of one string and a broken back.

"See, Leon—what mamma got! A violin! A fiddle! Look! The bow, too, I found. It ain't much, baby, but it's a fiddle."

"Aw, ma—that's my old violin. Gimme. I want it. Where'd you find——"

"Hush up, Izzie! This ain't yours no more. See, Leon, what mamma brought you. A violin!"

"Now, you little *chammer,* you got a feedle, and if you ever let me hear you holler again for a feedle, by golly! if I don't——"

From his corner, Leon Kantor reached out, taking the instrument and fitting it beneath his chin, the bow immediately feeling, surely and lightly, for string.

"Look, Abrahm, he knows how to hold it! What did I tell you? A child that never in his life seen a fiddle, except a beggar's on the street!"

Little Esther suddenly cantered down-floor, clapping her chubby hands.

"Lookie—lookie—Leon!"

The baby ceased clattering his spoon against the wooden bib. A silence seemed to shape itself.

So black and so bristly of head, his little clawlike hands hovering over the bow, Leon Kantor withdrew a note, strangely round and given up almost sobbingly from the single string. A note of warm twining quality, like a baby's finger.

"Leon—darlink!"

Fumbling for string and for notes the instrument could not yield up to him, the birdlike mouth began once more to open widely and terribly into the orificial O.

It was then Abrahm Kantor came down with a large hollow resonance of palm against that aperture, lifting his small son and depositing him plop upon the family album.

"Take that! By golly! one more whimper out of you and if I don't make you black-and-blue, birthday or no birthday! Dish up, Sarah, quick, or I'll give him something to cry about."

The five pink candles had been lighted, burning pointedly and with slender little smoke wisps. Regarding them owlishly, the tears dried on Leon's face, his little tongue licking up at them.

"Look how solemn he is, like he was thinking of something a million miles away except how lucky he is he should have a pink birthday-cake. Uh—uh—uh! Don't you begin to holler again. Here, I'm putting the feedle next to you. Uh—uh—uh!"

To a meal plentifully ladled out directly from stove to table, the Kantor family drew up, dipping first into the rich black soup of the occasion. All except Mrs. Kantor.

"Esther, you dish up. I'm going somewhere. I'll be back in a minute."

"Where you going, Sarah? Won't it keep until——"

But even in the face of query, Sarah Kantor was two flights down and well through the lambent aisles of the copper-shop. Outside, she broke into run, along two blocks of the indescribable bazaar atmosphere of Grand Street, then one block to the right.

Before Naftel's show-window, a jet of bright gas burned into a jibberwock land of toys. There was that in Sarah Kantor's face that was actually lyrical as, fumbling at the bosom of her dress, she entered.

To Leon Kantor, by who knows what symphonic scheme of things, life was a chromatic scale, yielding up to him, through throbbing, living nerves of sheep-gut, the sheerest semitones of man's emotions.

When he tucked his Stradivarius beneath his chin the book of life seemed suddenly translated to him in melody. Even Sarah Kantor, who still brewed for him, on a small portable

stove carried from city to city and surreptitiously unpacked in hotel suites, the blackest of soups, and, despite his protestation, would incase his ears of nights in an old home-made device against their flightiness, would oftentimes bleed inwardly at this sense of his isolation.

There was a realm into which he went alone, leaving her as detached as the merest ticket purchaser at the box-office.

At seventeen Leon Kantor had played before the crowned heads of Europe, the aching heads of American capital, and even the shaved head of a South Sea prince. There was a layout of anecdotal gifts, from the molar tooth of the South Sea prince set in a South Sea pearl to a blue-enameled snuff-box incrusted with the rearing-lion coat-of-arms of a very royal house.

At eighteen came the purchase of a king's Stradivarius for a king's ransom, and acclaimed by Sunday supplements to repose of nights in an ivory cradle.

At nineteen, under careful auspices of press agent, the ten singing digits of the son of Abrahm Kantor were insured at ten thousand dollars the finger.

At twenty he had emerged surely and safely from the perilous quicksands which have sucked down whole Lilliputian worlds of infant prodigies.

At twenty-one, when Leon Kantor played a Sunday-night concert, there was a human queue curling entirely around the square block of the opera-house, waiting its one, two, even three and four hours for the privilege of standing room only.

Usually these were Leon Kantor's own people pouring up from the lowly lands of the East Side to the white lands of Broadway, parched for music, these burning brethren of his —old men in that line, frequently carrying their own little folding camp-chairs, not against weariness of the spirit, but of the flesh; youth with Slavic eyes and cheek-bones. These were the six-deep human phalanx which would presently slant down at him from tiers of steepest balconies and stand frankly emotional and jammed in the unreserved space be-

hind the railing which shut them off from the three-dollar seats of the reserved.

At a very special one of these concerts, dedicated to the meager purses of just these, and held in New York's super opera-house, the Amphitheater, a great bowl of humanity, the metaphor made perfect by tiers of seats placed upon the stage, rose from orchestra to dome. A gigantic cup of a Colosseum lined in stacks and stacks of faces. From the door of his dressing-room, leaning out, Leon Kantor could see a great segment of it, buzzing down into adjustment, orchestra twitting and tuning into it.

In the bare little room, illuminated by a sheaf of roses, just arrived, Mrs. Kantor drew him back by the elbow.

"Leon, you're in a draught."

The amazing years had dealt kindly with Mrs. Kantor. Stouter, softer, apparently even taller, she was full of small new authorities that could shut out cranks, newspaper reporters, and autograph fiends. A fitted-over-corsets black taffeta and a high comb in the graying hair had done their best with her. Pride, too, had left its flush upon her cheeks, like two round spots of fever.

"Leon, it's thirty minutes till your first number. Close that door. Do you want to let your papa and his excitement in on you?"

The son of Sarah Kantor obeyed, leaning his short, rather narrow form in silhouette against the closed door. In spite of slimly dark evening clothes worked out by an astute manager to the last detail in boyish effects, there was that about him which defied long-haired precedent. Slimly and straightly he had shot up into an unmannered, a short, even a bristly-haired young manhood, disqualifying by a close shave for the older school of hirsute virtuosity.

But his nerves did not spare him. On concert nights they seemed to emerge almost to the surface of him and shriek their exposure.

"Just feel my hands, ma. Like ice."

She dived down into her large silk what-not of a reticule.

"I've got your fleece-lined gloves here, son."

"No—no! For God's sake—not those things! No!"

He was back at the door again, opening it to a slit, peering through.

"They're bringing more seats on the stage. If they crowd me in I won't go on. I can't play if I hear them breathe. Hi—out there—no more chairs! Pa! Hancock——"

"Leon, Leon, ain't you ashamed to get so worked up? Close that door. Have you got a manager who is paid just to see to your comfort? When papa comes, I'll have him go out and tell Hancock you don't want chairs so close to you. Leon, will you mind mamma and sit down?"

"It's a bigger house than the royal concert in Madrid, ma. Why, I never saw anything like it! It's a stampede. God! this is real—this is what gets me, playing for my own! I should have given a concert like this three years ago. I'll do it every year now. I'd rather play before them than all the crowned heads on earth. It's the biggest night of my life. They're rioting out there, ma—rioting to get in."

"Leon, Leon, won't you sit down, if mamma begs you to?"

He sat then, strumming with all ten fingers upon his knees.

"Try to get quiet, son. Count—like you always do. One—two—three——"

"Please, ma—for God's sake—please—please!"

"Look—such beautiful roses! From Sol Ginsberg, an old friend of papa's he used to buy brasses from eighteen years ago. Six years he's been away with his daughter in Munich. Such a beautiful mezzo they say, engaged already for Metropolitan next season."

"I hate it, ma, if they breathe on my neck."

"Leon darlink, did mamma promise to fix it? Have I ever let you play a concert when you wouldn't be comfortable?"

His long, slim hands suddenly prehensile and cutting a

streak of upward gesture, Leon Kantor rose to his feet, face whitening.

"Do it now! Now, I tell you. I won't have them breathe on me. Do you hear me? Now! Now! Now!"

Risen also, her face soft and tremulous for him, Mrs. Kantor put out a gentle, a sedative hand upon his sleeve.

"Son," she said, with an edge of authority even behind her smile, "don't holler at me!"

He grasped her hand with his two and, immediately quiet, lay a close string of kisses along it.

"Mamma," he said, kissing again and again into the palm, "mamma—mamma."

"I know, son; it's nerves!"

"They eat me, ma. Feel—I'm like ice! I didn't mean it; you know I didn't mean it!"

"My baby," she said, "my wonderful boy, it's like I can never get used to the wonder of having you. The greatest one of them all should be mine—a plain woman's like mine!"

He teased her, eager to conciliate and to ride down his own state of quivering.

"Now, ma—now—now—don't forget Rimsky!"

"Rimsky! A man three times your age who was playing concerts before you was born! Is that a comparison? From your clippings-books I can show Rimsky who the world considers the greatest violinist. Rimsky he rubs into me!"

"All right, then, the press-clippings, but did Elsass, the greatest manager of them all, bring me a contract for thirty concerts at two thousand a concert? Now I've got you! Now!"

She would not meet his laughter. "Elsass! Believe me, he'll come to you yet! My boy should worry if he makes fifty thousand a year more or less. Rimsky should have that honor —for so long as he can hold it. But he won't hold it long. Believe me, I don't rest easy in my bed till Elsass comes after you. Not for so big a contract like Rimsky's, but bigger— not for thirty concerts, but for fifty!"

"Brava! Brava! There's a woman for you. More money than she knows what to do with, and then not satisfied!"

She was still too tremulous for banter. "'Not satisfied'? Why, Leon, I never stop praying my thanks for you!"

"All right, then," he cried, laying his icy fingers on her cheek; "to-morrow we'll call a *mignon*—a regular old-fashioned Allen Street prayer-party."

"Leon, you mustn't make fun."

"Make fun of the sweetest girl in this room!"

"'Girl'! Ah, if I could only hold you by me this way, Leon. Always a boy—with me—your poor old mother—your only girl. That's a fear I suffer with, Leon—to lose you to a—girl. That's how selfish the mother of such a wonder-child like mine can get to be."

"All right! Trying to get me married off again. Nice! Fine."

"Is it any wonder I suffer, son? Twenty-one years to have kept you by me a child. A boy that never in his life was out after midnight except to catch trains. A boy that never has so much as looked at a girl and could have looked at princesses. To have kept you all these years—mine—is it any wonder, son, I never stop praying my thanks for you? You don't believe Hancock, son, the way he keeps always teasing you that you should have a—what he calls—affair—a love-affair? Such talk is not nice, Leon—an affair!"

"Love-affair poppycock!" said Leon Kantor, lifting his mother's face and kissing her on eyes about ready to tear. "Why, I've got something, ma, right here in my heart for you that——"

"Leon, be careful your shirt-front!"

"That's so—so what you call 'tender,' for my best sweetheart that I—— Oh, love-affair—poppycock!"

She would not let her tears come.

"My boy—my wonder-boy!"

"There goes the overture, ma."

"Here, darlink—your glass of water."

"I can't stand it in here; I'm suffocating!"

"Got your mute in your pocket, son?"

"Yes, ma; for God's sake, yes! Yes! Don't keep asking things!"

"Ain't you ashamed, Leon, to be in such an excitement! For every concert you get worse."

"The chairs—they'll breathe on my neck."

"Leon, did mamma promise you those chairs would be moved?"

"Where's Hancock?"

"Say—I'm grateful if he stays out. It took me enough work to get this room cleared. You know your papa how he likes to drag in the whole world to show you off—always just before you play. The minute he walks in the room right away he gets everybody to trembling just from his own excitements. I dare him this time he should bring people. No dignity has that man got, the way he brings every one."

Even upon her words came a rattling of door, of door-knob, and a voice through the clamor.

"Open—quick—Sarah! Leon!"

A stiffening raced over Mrs. Kantor, so that she sat rigid on her chair-edge, lips compressed, eye darkly upon the shivering door.

"Open—Sarah!"

With a narrowing glance, Mrs. Kantor laid to her lips a forefinger of silence.

"Sarah, it's me! Quick, I say!"

Then Leon Kantor sprang up, the old prehensile gesture of curving fingers shooting up.

"For God's sake, ma, let him in! I can't stand that infernal battering."

"Abrahm, go away! Leon's got to have quiet before his concert."

"Just a minute, Sarah. Open quick!"

With a spring his son was at the door, unlocking and flinging it back.

"Come in, pa."

The years had weighed heavily upon Abrahm Kantor in avoirdupois only. He was himself plus eighteen years, fifty pounds, and a new sleek pomposity that was absolutely oleaginous. It shone roundly in his face, doubling of chin, in the bulge of waistcoat, heavily gold-chained, and in eyes that behind the gold-rimmed glasses gave sparklingly forth his estate of well-being.

"Abrahm, didn't I tell you not to dare to——"

On excited balls of feet that fairly bounced him, Abrahm Kantor burst in.

"Leon—mamma—I got out here an old friend—Sol Ginsberg. You remember, mamma, from brasses——"

"Abrahm—not now——"

"Go away with your 'not now'! I want Leon should meet him. Sol, this is him—a little grown up from such a *nebich* like you remember him—*nu?* Sarah, you remember Sol Ginsberg? Say—I should ask you if you remember your right hand! Ginsberg & Esel, the firm. This is his girl, a five years' contract signed yesterday—five hundred dollars an opera for a beginner—six rôles—not bad—*nu?*"

"Abrahm, you must ask Mr. Ginsberg please to excuse Leon until after his concert——"

"Shake hands with him, Ginsberg. He's had his hand shook enough in his life, and by kings, to shake it once more with an old bouncer like you!"

Mr. Ginsberg, not unlike his colleague in rotundities, held out a short, a dimpled hand.

"It's a proud day," he said, "for me to shake the hands from mine old friend's son and the finest violinist livink today. My little daughter——"

"Yes, yes, Gina. Here, shake hands with him. Leon, they say a voice like a fountain. Gina Berg—eh, Ginsberg—is how you stage-named her? You hear, mamma, how fancy—Gina Berg? We go hear her, eh?"

There was about Miss Gina Berg, whose voice could soar

to the tirra-lirra of a lark and then deepen to mezzo, something of the actual slimness of the poor, maligned Elsa so long buried beneath the buxomness of divas. She was like a little flower that in its crannied nook keeps dewy longest.

"How do you do, Leon Kantor?"

There was a whir through her English of three acquired languages.

"How do *you* do?"

"We—father and I—traveled once all the way from Brussels to Dresden to hear you. It was worth it. I shall never forget how you played the 'Humoresque.' It made me laugh and cry."

"You like Brussels?"

She laid her little hand to her heart, half closing her eyes.

"I will never be so happy again as with the sweet little people of Brussels."

"I, too, love Brussels. I studied there four years with Ahrenfest."

"I know you did. My teacher, Lyndahl, in Berlin, was his brother-in-law."

"You have studied with Lyndahl?"

"He is my master."

"I—— Will I some time hear you sing?"

"I am not yet great. When I am foremost like you, yes."

"Gina—Gina Berg; that is a beautiful name to make famous."

"You see how it is done? Gins—berg. Gina Berg."

"Clev—er!"

They stood then smiling across a chasm of the diffidence of youth, she fumbling at the great fur pelt out of which her face flowered so dewily.

"I—— Well—we—we—are in the fourth box— I guess we had better be going— Fourth box, left."

He wanted to find words, but for consciousness of self, could not.

"It's a wonderful house out there waiting for you, Leon Kantor, and you—you're wonderful, too!"

"The—flowers—thanks!"

"My father, he sent them. Come, father—quick!"

Suddenly there was a tight tensity that seemed to crowd up the little room.

"Abrahm—quick—get Hancock. That first row of chairs—has got to be moved. There he is, in the wings. See that the piano ain't dragged down too far! Leon, got your mute in your pocket? Please, Mr. Ginsberg—you must excuse—Here, Leon, is your glass of water; drink it, I say. Shut that door out there, boy, so there ain't a draught in the wings. Here, Leon, your violin. Got your neckerchief? Listen how they're shouting! It's for you—Leon—darlink—— Go!"

The center of that vast human bowl which had shouted itself out, slim, boylike, and in his supreme isolation, Leon Kantor drew bow and a first thin, pellucid, and perfect note into a silence breathless to receive it.

Throughout the arduous flexuosities of the Mendelssohn E minor concerto, singing, winding from tonal to tonal climax, and out of the slow movement which is like a tourniquet twisting the heart into the spirited *allegro molto vivace*, it was as if beneath Leon Kantor's fingers the strings were living vein-cords, youth, vitality, and the very foam of exuberance racing through them.

That was the power of him. The vichy and the sparkle of youth, so that, playing, the melody poured round him like wine and went down seething and singing into the hearts of his hearers.

Later, and because these were his people and because they were dark and Slavic with his Slavic darkness, he played, as if his very blood were weeping, the "Kol Nidre," which is the prayer of his race for atonement.

And then the super-amphitheater, filled with those whose emotions lie next to the surface and whose pores have not been

closed over with a water-tight veneer, burst into its cheers and its tears.

There were fifteen recalls from the wings, Abrahm Kantor standing counting them off on his fingers and trembling to receive the Stradivarius. Then, finally, and against the frantic negative pantomime of his manager, a scherzo, played so lacily that it swept the house in lightest laughter.

When Leon Kantor finally completed his program they were loath to let him go, crowding down the aisles upon him, applauding up, down, around him until the great disheveled house was like the roaring of a sea, and he would laugh and throw out his arm in widespread helplessness, and always his manager in the background gesticulating against too much of his precious product for the money, ushers already slamming up chairs, his father's arms out for the Stradivarius, and, deepest in the gloom of the wings, Sarah Kantor, in a rocker especially dragged out for her, and from the depths of the black-silk reticule, darning his socks.

"Bravo—bravo! Give us the 'Humoresque'—Chopin Nocturne—Polonaise—'Humoresque.' Bravo—bravo!"

And even as they stood, hatted and coated, importuning and pressing in upon him, and with a wisp of a smile to the fourth left box, Leon Kantor played them the "Humoresque" of Dvorák, skedaddling, plucking, quirking—that laugh on life with a tear behind it. Then suddenly, because he could escape no other way, rushed straight back for his dressing-room, bursting in upon a flood of family already there: Isadore Kantor, blue-shaved, aquiline, and already graying at the temples; his five-year-old son, Leon; a soft little pouter-pigeon of a wife, too, enormous of bust, in glittering ear-drops and a wrist watch of diamonds half buried in chubby wrist; Miss Esther Kantor, pink and pretty; Rudolph; Boris, not yet done with growing-pains.

At the door Miss Kantor met her brother, her eyes as sweetly moist as her kiss.

"Leon darling, you surpassed even yourself!"

"Quit crowding, children. Let him sit down. Here, Leon, let mamma give you a fresh collar. Look how the child's perspired. Pull down that window, Boris. Rudolph, don't let no one in. I give you my word if to-night wasn't as near as I ever came to seeing a house go crazy. Not even that time in Milan, darlink, when they broke down the doors, was it like to-night——"

"Ought to seen, ma, the row of police outside——"

"Hush up, Roody! Don't you see your brother is trying to get his breath?"

From Mrs. Isadore Kantor: "You should have seen the balconies, mother. Isadore and I went up just to see the jam."

"Six thousand dollars in the house to-night, if there was a cent," said Isadore Kantor.

"Hand me my violin, please, Esther. I must have scratched it, the way they pushed."

"No, son, you didn't. I've already rubbed it up. Sit quiet, darlink!"

He was limply white, as if the vitality had flowed out of him.

"God! wasn't it—tremendous?"

"Six thousand, if there was a cent," repeated Isadore Kantor. "More than Rimsky ever played to in his life!"

"Oh, Izzie, you make me sick, always counting—counting!"

"Your sister's right, Isadore. You got nothing to complain of if there was only six hundred in the house. A boy whose fiddle has made already enough to set you up in such a fine business, his brother Boris in such a fine college, automobiles—style—and now because Vladimir Rimsky, three times his age, gets signed up with Elsass for a few thousand more a year, right away the family gets a long face——"

"Ma, please! Isadore didn't mean it that way!"

"Pa's knocking, ma! Shall I let him in?"

"Let him in, Roody. I'd like to know what good it will do to try to keep him out."

In an actual rain of perspiration, his tie slid well under one ear, Abrahm Kantor burst in, mouthing the words before his acute state of strangulation would let them out.

"Elsass—it's Elsass outside! He—wants—to sign—Leon—fifty concerts—coast to coast—two thousand—next season! He's got the papers—already drawn up—the pen outside waiting——"

"Abrahm!"

"Pa!"

In the silence that followed, Isadore Kantor, a poppiness of stare and a violent redness set in, suddenly turned to his five-year-old son, sticky with lollipop, and came down soundly and with smack against the infantile, the slightly outstanding and unsuspecting ear.

"Momser!" he cried. *"Chammer! Lump! Ganef!"* You hear that? Two thousand! Two thousand! Didn't I tell you—didn't I tell you to practise?"

Even as Leon Kantor put pen to this princely document, Franz Ferdinand of Serbia, the assassin's bullet cold, lay dead in state, and let slip were the dogs of war.

In the next years, men, forty deep, were to die in piles; hayricks of fields to become human hayricks of battle-fields; Belgium disemboweled, her very entrails dragging, to find all the civilized world her champion, and between the poppies of Flanders, crosses, thousand upon thousand of them, to mark the places where the youth of her allies fell, avenging outrage. Seas, even when calmest, were to become terrible, and men's heart-beats, a bit sluggish with the fatty degeneration of a sluggard peace, to quicken and then to throb with the rat-a-tat-tat, the rat-a-tat-tat of the most peremptory, the most reverberating call to arms in the history of the world.

In June, 1917, Leon Kantor, answering that rat-a-tat-tat, enlisted.

In November, honed by the interim of training to even a new leanness, and sailing-orders heavy and light in his heart, Lieutenant Kantor, on two days' home-leave took leave of home, which can be cruelest when it is tenderest.

Standing there in the expensive, the formal, the enormous French parlor of his up-town apartment de luxe, from not one of whose chairs would his mother's feet touch floor, a wall of living flesh, mortared in blood, was throbbing and hedging him in.

He would pace up and down the long room, heavy with the faces of those who mourn, with a laugh too ready, too facetious, in his fear for them.

"Well, well, what is this, anyway, a wake? Where's the coffin? Who's dead?"

His sister-in-law shot out her plump, watch-encrusted wrist. "Don't, Leon!" she cried. "Such talk is a sin! It might come true."

"Rosie-posy-butter-ball," he said, pausing beside her chair to pinch her deeply soft cheek. "Cry-baby-roly-poly, you can't shove me off in a wooden kimono that way."

From his place before the white-and-gold mantel, staring steadfastly at the floor tiling, Isadore Kantor turned suddenly, a bit whiter and older at the temples.

"I don't get your comedy, Leon."

"'Wooden kimono'—Leon?"

"That's the way the fellows at camp joke about coffins, ma. I didn't mean anything but fun! Great Scott! Can't any one take a joke!"

"O God! O God!" His mother fell to swaying softly, hugging herself against shivering.

"Did you sign over power of attorney to pa, Leon?"

"All fixed, Izzie."

"I'm so afraid, son, you don't take with you enough money in your pockets. You know how you lose it. If only you would let mamma sew that little bag inside your uniform

with a little place for bills and a little place for the asafœtida!"

"Now, please, ma—please! If I needed more, wouldn't I take it? Wouldn't I be a pretty joke among the fellows, tied up in that smelling stuff! Orders are orders, ma. I know what to take and what not to take."

"Please, Leon, don't get mad at me, but if you will let me put in your suit-case just one little box of that salve, for your finger-tips, so they don't crack——"

Pausing as he paced to lay cheek to her hair, he patted her. "Three boxes, if you want. Now, how's that?"

"And you won't take it out so soon as my back is turned?"

"Cross my heart."

His touch seemed to set her trembling again, all her illy concealed emotions rushing up. "I can't stand it! Can't! Can't! Take my life—take my blood, but don't take my boy—don't take my boy——"

"Mamma, mamma, is that the way you're going to begin all over again, after your promise?"

She clung to him, heaving against the rising storm of sobs. "I can't help it—can't! Cut out my heart from me, but let me keep my boy—my wonder-boy——"

"Oughtn't she be ashamed of herself? Just listen to her, Esther! What will we do with her? Talks like she had a guarantee I wasn't coming back. Why, I wouldn't be surprised if by spring I wasn't tuning up again for a coast-to-coast tour——"

"Spring! That talk don't fool me. Without my boy, the springs in my life are over——"

"Why, ma, you talk like every soldier who goes to war was killed! There's only the smallest percentage of them die in battle——"

"'Spring,' he says; 'spring'! Crossing the seas from me! To live through months with that sea between us—my boy maybe shot—my——"

"Mamma, please!"

"I can't help it, Leon; I'm not one of those fine mothers that can be so brave. Cut out my heart, but leave my boy! My wonder-boy—my child I prayed for!"

"There's other mothers, ma, with sons!"

"Yes, but not wonder-sons! A genius like you could so easy get excused, Leon. Give it up. Genius it should be the last to be sent to—the slaughter-pen. Leon darlink—don't go!"

"Ma, ma—you don't mean what you're saying. You wouldn't want me to reason that way! You wouldn't want me to hide behind my—violin."

"I would! Would! You should wait for the draft. With my Roody and even my baby Boris enlisted, ain't it enough for one mother? Since they got to be in camp, all right, I say, let them be there, if my heart breaks for it, but not my wonder-child! You can get exemption, Leon, right away for the asking. Stay with me, Leon! Don't go away! The people at home got to be kept happy with music. That's being a soldier, too, playing their troubles away. Stay with me, Leon! Don't go leave me—don't—don't——"

He suffered her to lie, tear-drenched, back into his arms, holding her close in his compassion for her, his own face twisting.

"God! ma, this—this is awful! Please—you make us ashamed—all of us! I don't know what to say. Esther, come quiet her—for God's sake quiet her!"

From her place in that sobbing circle Esther Kantor crossed to kneel beside her mother.

"Mamma darling, you're killing yourself. What if every family went on this way? You want papa to come in and find us all crying? Is this the way you want Leon to spend his last hour with us——"

"Oh, God—God!"

"I mean his last hour until he comes back, darling. Didn't you just hear him say, darling, it may be by spring?"

"'Spring'—'spring'—never no more springs for me——"

"Just think, darling, how proud we should be! Our Leon, who could so easily have been excused, not even to wait for the draft."

"It's not too late yet—please—Leon——"

"Our Roody and Boris both in camp, too, training to serve their country. Why, mamma, we ought to be crying for happiness. As Leon says, surely the Kantor family, who fled out of Russia to escape massacre, should know how terrible slavery can be. That's why we must help our boys, mamma, in their fight to make the world free! Right, Leon?" trying to smile with her red-rimmed eyes.

"We've got no fight with no one! Not a child of mine was ever raised to so much as lift a finger against no one. We've got no fight with no one!"

"We have got a fight with some one! With autocracy! Only this time it happens to be Hunnish autocracy. You should know it, mamma—oh, you should know it deeper down in you than any of us, the fight our family right here has got with autocracy! We should be the first to want to avenge Belgium!"

"Leon's right, mamma darling, the way you and papa were beaten out of your country——"

"There's not a day in your life you don't curse it without knowing it! Every time we three boys look at your son and our brother Mannie, born an—an imbecile—because of autocracy, we know what we're fighting for. We know. You know, too. Look at him over there, even before he was born, ruined by autocracy! Know what I'm fighting for? Why, this whole family knows! What's music, what's art, what's life itself in a world without freedom? Every time, ma, you get to thinking we've got a fight with no one, all you have to do is look at our poor Mannie. He's the answer. He's the answer."

In a foaming sort of silence, Mannie Kantor smiled softly from his chair beneath the pink-and-gold shade of the piano-

lamp. The heterogeneous sounds of women weeping had ceased. Straight in her chair, her great shelf of bust heaving, sat Rosa Kantor, suddenly dry of eye; Isadore Kantor head up. Erect now, and out from the embrace of her daughter, Sarah looked up at her son.

"What time do you leave, Leon?" she asked, actually firm of lip.

"Any minute, ma. Getting late."

This time she pulled her lips to a smile, waggling her forefinger.

"Don't let them little devils of French girls fall in love with my dude in his uniform."

Her pretense at pleasantry was almost more than he could bear.

"Hear! Hear. Our mother thinks I'm a regular lady-killer! Hear that, Esther?" pinching her cheek.

"You are, Leon—only—only, you don't know it!"

"Don't you bring down too many beaux while I'm gone, either, Miss Kantor!"

"I—won't, Leon."

Sotto voce to her: "Remember, Esther, while I'm gone, the royalties from the discaphone records are yours. I want you to have them for pin-money and—maybe a dowry?"

She turned from him. "Don't, Leon—don't——"

"I like him! Nice fellow, but too slow! Why if I were in his shoes I'd have popped long ago."

She smiled with her lashes dewy.

There entered then, in a violet-scented little whirl, Miss Gina Berg, rosy with the sting of a winter's night, and, as usual, swathed in the high-napped furs.

"Gina!"

She was for greeting every one, a wafted kiss to Mrs. Kantor, and then, arms wide, a great bunch of violets in one outstretched hand, her glance straight, sure, and sparkling for Leon Kantor.

"Surprise—everybody—surprise!"

"Why, Gina—we read—we thought you were singing in Philadelphia to-night!"

"So did I, Esther darling, until a little bird whispered to me that Lieutenant Kantor was home on farewell leave."

He advanced to her down the great length of room, lowering his head over her hand, his puttee-clad legs clicking together. "You mean, Miss Gina—Gina—you didn't sing?"

"Of course I didn't! Hasn't every prima donna a larynx to hide behind?" She lifted off her fur cap, spilling curls.

"Well, I—I'll be hanged!" said Lieutenant Kantor, his eyes lakes of her reflected loveliness.

She let her hand linger in his. "Leon—you—really going? How—terrible! How—how—wonderful!"

"How wonderful—your coming!"

"I—— You think it was not nice of me—to come?"

"I think it was the nicest thing that ever happened in the world."

"All the way here in the train I kept saying, 'Crazy—crazy—running to tell Leon—Lieutenant—Kantor good-by—when you haven't even seen him three times in three years——'"

"But each—each of those three times we—we've remembered, Gina."

"But that's how I feel toward all the boys, Leon—our fighting boys—just like flying to them to kiss them each one good-by."

"Come over, Gina. You'll be a treat to our mother. I—Well, I'll be hanged! All the way from Philadelphia!"

There was even a sparkle to talk, then, and a let-up of pressure. After a while Sarah Kantor looked up at her son, tremulous, but smiling.

"Well, son, you going to play—for your old mother before—you go? It'll be many a month—spring—maybe longer, before I hear my boy again except on the discaphone."

He shot a quick glance to his sister. "Why, I—I don't know. I—I'd love it, ma, if—if you think, Esther, I'd better."

"You don't need to be afraid of me, darlink. There's nothing can give me the strength to bear—what's before me like—like my boy's music. That's my life, his music."

"Why, yes; if mamma is sure she feels that way, play for us, Leon."

He was already at the instrument, where it lay, swathed, atop the grand piano. "What'll it be, folks?"

"Something to make ma laugh, Leon—something light, something funny."

"'Humoresque,'" he said, with a quick glance for Miss Berg.

"'Humoresque,'" she said, smiling back at him.

He capered through, cutting and playful of bow, the melody of Dvorák's, which is as ironic as a grinning mask.

Finished, he smiled at his parent, her face still untearful. "How's that?"

She nodded. "It's like life, son, that piece. Crying to hide its laughing and laughing to hide its crying."

"Play that new piece, Leon—the one you set to music. You know. The words by that young boy in the war who wrote such grand poetry before he was killed. The one that always makes poor Mannie laugh. Play it for him, Leon."

Her plump little unlined face innocent of fault, Mrs. Isadore Kantor ventured her request, her smile tired with tears.

"No, no—Rosa—not now! Ma wouldn't want that!"

"I do, son; I do! Even Mannie should have his share of good-by."

To Gina Berg: "They want me to play that little arrangement of mine from Allan Seegar's poem, 'I Have a Rendezvous . . .'"

"It—it's beautiful, Leon. I was to have sung it on my program to-night—only, I'm afraid you had better not—here—now——"

"Please, Leon! Nothing you play can ever make me as sad as it makes me glad. Mannie should have, too, his good-by."

"All right, then, ma—if—if you're sure you want it. Will you sing it, Gina?"

She had risen. "Why, yes, Leon."

She sang it then, quite purely, her hands clasped simply together and her glance mistily off, the beautiful, the heroic, the lyrical prophecy of a soldier-poet and a poet-soldier:

> **But I've a rendezvous with Death**
> **On some scarred slope of battered hill,**
> **When spring comes round again this year**
> **And the first meadow-flowers appear.**

In the silence that followed, a sob burst out, stifled, from Esther Kantor, this time her mother holding her in arms that were strong.

"That, Leon, is the most beautiful of all your compositions. What does it mean, son, that word, 'rondy-voo'?"

"Why, I—I don't exactly know. A rendezvous—it's a sort of meeting, an engagement, isn't it, Miss Gina? Gina? You're up on languages. As if I had an appointment to meet you some place—at the opera-house, for instance."

"That's it, Leon—an engagement."

"Have I an engagement with you, Gina?"

She let her lids droop. "Oh, how—how I hope you have, Leon."

"When?"

"In the spring?"

"That's it—in the spring."

Then they smiled, these two, who had never felt more than the merest butterfly wings of love brushing them, light as lashes. No word between them, only an unfinished sweetness, waiting to be linked up.

Suddenly there burst in Abrahm Kantor, in a carefully rehearsed gale of bluster.

"Quick, Leon! I got the car down-stairs. Just fifteen minutes to make the ferry. Quick! The sooner we get him over there the sooner we get him back. I'm right, mamma?

Now, now! No water-works! Get your brother's suit-case, Isadore. Now, now! No non-sense! Quick—quick——"

With a deftly manœuvered round of good-bys, a grip-laden dash for the door, a throbbing moment of turning back when it seemed as though Sarah Kantor's arms could not unlock their deadlock of him, Leon Kantor was out and gone, the group of faces point-etched into the silence behind him.

The poor, mute face of Mannie, laughing softly. Rosa Kantor crying into her hands. Esther, grief-crumpled, but rich in the enormous hope of youth. The sweet Gina, to whom the waiting months had already begun their reality.

Not so Sarah Kantor. In a bedroom adjoining, its high-ceilinged vastness as cold as a cathedral to her lowness of stature, sobs dry and terrible were rumbling up from her, only to dash against lips tightly restraining them.

On her knees beside a chest of drawers, and unwrapping it from swaddling-clothes, she withdrew what at best had been a sorry sort of fiddle.

Cracked of back and solitary of string, it was as if her trembling arms, raising it above her head, would make of themselves and her swaying body the tripod of an altar.

The old twisting and prophetic pain was behind her heart. Like the painted billows of music that the old Italian masters loved to do, there wound and wreathed about her clouds of song:

> **But I've a rendezvous with Death**
> **On some scarred slope of battered hill,**
> **When spring comes round again this year**
> **And the first meadow-flowers appear.**

THE GAME OF LIFE AND DEATH *

By Lincoln Colcord

There aren't any more of those evenings under the awning in Hong Kong harbor, the evenings that Nichols used to like so well. The ships and the trade have dropped away; and Nichols is gone, too, for that matter. But we who are left remember him always in connection with those friendly gatherings. We came to look for his little bark on our arrival; and more than often she would be lying under Kowloonside, a small vessel painted in the most extraordinary colors, cream-white above and bottle-green below the water line, with a good deal of bright yellow on the woodwork about her decks.

Nichols stood apart, a singular and interesting man. His experience in the coastwise trade of China had been remarkable. A certain alien strain had crept into his blood; he held the reputation of knowing half a dozen Chinese dialects, and dealing in matters beyond the impenetrable border of the land.

As I came up the *Omega's* gangway one evening, Nichols was hanging paper lanterns beneath the awning. He expected the captains of the fleet on board to bid him good-bye. Together we sat by the rail and watched the sampans gather from the ships. A puff of off-shore breeze lifted the awning, rustling among the paper globes. The quiet harbor lay like a

* From *The Game of Life and Death;* copyright, 1914, by The Macmillan Company. Reprinted by permission of the author and the publishers.

pool at the foot of the Peak. Men drifted in by twos and threes, dropping into comfortable deck-chairs. Glasses clinked, cigars were lighted. The talk turned to typhoons of the past; and Nichols told a tale.

I

"I wouldn't ask you to believe me," he began, "if I couldn't refer you to Lee Fu Chang. You know him; he's probably chartered all of you for home, at different times. He is the soul of honor, and would confirm my most incredible detail. The next time any of you fellows have occasion to call at his office, bear my story in mind and take another look at him. You'll see him as he chooses to have it, for purposes of business; a tall and rather stout Chinaman, smiling, dignified, graceful, offering you a chair beside a heavily carved blackwood table, and a cup of tea in an eggshell from his own hands. You may imagine that his thoughts are bounded by the walls of that little room, piled high with rolls of silk, embellished with fantastic decorations and ornaments, the symbols of his trade. He sits there so placidly, seems so utterly at rest. You would be astonished and disconcerted to know what's going on behind his eyes.

" 'Babbling fool,' he is thinking, 'I see that you are not for long. My race, enduring quietly, and waiting, has acquired much wisdom through many years. The progress of races is accomplished only in the soul of the individual; and the soul of the individual increases, not according to its knowledge of many extraneous matters, but rather according to its wisdom in a few essential matters. Nothing can be important, if through it the life of the race fails.'

"Then, maybe, Lee Fu will run over your charter-party with you; and while you're giving it a final examination, he'll lean back in his chair and fold his hands. 'What other race than mine, my friend,' he'll go on thinking, 'could throw off

the evil of opium by the assembled efforts of individual wills? What other race than mine could have kept its lands in a state of undiminished fertility for forty centuries? What other race than mine could have developed an immunity to its native diseases through the fundamental process of natural selection? These matters, my friend, touch the life of the race. They are greater things than to have made many inventions, or triumphed in many wars.

"By this time, you'll have finished reading your charter-party. Lee Fu will receive it from your hand, and fold it carefully; and as he puts it away in its proper pigeon-hole, he'll say to himself, 'My friend, I hate you, as a member of your mean and lying race. I see you coming to China for gold, with words of hypocrisy in your mouths. You have forced the opium upon us at the point of the sword. In the name of your religion, you have seized our lands. We see at last that there is no truth in you, nor any good intention; but that your civilization rests wholly upon the power of wealth and arms. From now, China shall rise against you. The best she will take, and the worst she will throw aside. You are not worthy to survive. Wait a thousand years, and I will draw up a charter-party with you again.'"

Nichols waved a thin and expressive hand. "These Chinamen!" he said. "They have a latent power. Witness their game of poker. There's an enterprise that fits the Chinese character; it's philosophical, it requires a soul. They play it, stolid and inscrutable, with joy in their hearts. The contest goes on above the cards, an elusive passage of spirits, a clash of intangible energy, that in some way thrills and electrifies the beholder, though it's never betrayed by a glance or a movement or a word. I'm sure that Lee Fu Chang took a certain fierce pleasure in the game that night. In memory I feel it, too; but that's quite different. I'm free to admit that at the time the stakes were a trifle too heavy to attract my Occidental soul.

II

"I was bound from Hong Kong to Amoy; and Lee Fu Chang had taken passage with me, to attend to interests of his in the latter port. We had been friends for many years; I was then sailing on his charter. The old *Omega,* here, was a stauncher vessel in those days; although she lasts me very well. Jove, you should have seen her when they towed us into Hong Kong after the typhoon; a total wreck aloft, leaking, and badly stove about the decks. Worst of all, there was the terrible mess forward. We'd thrown the bodies overboard, but the blood remained. It took us a couple of months to get her into shape again, lying under the sheer-legs there, on Kowloonside. For one thing, I had the decks around the forecastle carefully planed. It was a disastrous trip for me; but, on the whole, I considered myself very lucky. To men who sympathized with me I answered that I wasn't complaining. No. Every time that I passed through the forward cabin and remembered what I'd seen there, I thanked my particular stars for being alive. God knows what might have become of us; the imagination halts at the possibilities. Torture, captivity, nameless ends—it isn't pleasant to contemplate. I can see them yet, a cabin-full of yellow masks, concealing a cabin-full of hearts that would have stopped at nothing; all watching the game, watching for a turn of the cards, for a sign to strike. No, it was good luck, the best of luck; a few masts are immaterial. Such cards are always good luck, though the heavens fall; especially when they're the only cards that will win.

"We sailed from Hong Kong in August, near the break of the southwest monsoon. A bad time to be starting north; but I've never hesitated at beating up or down the sea, as some men do. As for typhoons, there had been news of one outside the previous week; and I hoped to slip up along the coast before another put in an appearance.

"For a number of days we had light weather and a fair wind, the tailing-off of the southerly monsoon. Lee Fu and I played cards. He likes, as he expresses it, to keep his hands occupied, and does his thinking while he plays, a different attitude toward cards than the European one of playing them to pass away the time. We began at poker; but with all his preoccupation, not in the least assumed, I couldn't make the game interesting for him. I was born with a Caucasian face. We all have them—twitching faces, full of nerves, and eyes that are too closely hooked to the brain. Lee Fu's face is smooth and calm, like a face of frozen butter. His eyes seem not to move of themselves; now and then he'll turn his head slowly, and point them at you. It's disquieting, at a critical point in a losing game, to find a pair of eyes like that fixed upon you. I couldn't play his game of poker for a minute; so we took up cribbage. Now, I like cribbage; the cards play the game for you, mostly, and your soul doesn't get stirred up with trying to read another man's mind, and keeping your own mouth shut. So we cribbed it, morning, noon, and night. It was dull for Lee Fu.

"After a few days, the wind became variable; but the general weather seemed so quiet that I hung to the land, for the sake of the night breeze off-shore, watching all the while for typhoon signs out in the Channel. In five days, owing to contrary currents, we had made less than three hundred miles up the coast. There's a light on Lamock Island, which we passed on the evening of the fourth day, leaving it a dozen miles to port. Lee Fu was on deck with me that evening; and soon after we had passed the light he called my attention to a heavy bank of clouds low on the southeastern horizon. The words were hardly out of his mouth, when we noticed for the first time the lift of a new swell, coming in from the eastward; the vessel rose and dipped, and my heart suddenly felt as if it were rolling over to find a different position. That lift of the waters has but one meaning.

"'A rather bad place to get caught in,' I remarked over my shoulder to Lee Fu.

"He glanced astern, then in toward the land. 'Very bad,' he said. 'I think that we will get the first wind down the coast, from north. The center of the typhoon is out there, toward Formosa.' He always speaks as if in close communication with the spirit and authority of storms.

"'How do you know that, Lee Fu?' I asked.

"'There are many ways, all equally hard to explain,' he answered. 'Say, by the feeling of the swell.'

"I laughed. 'Well, there's but one thing to do,' I said. 'Put her on the starboard tack, and get her out into Formosa Channel.' The wind was still to the southward then. I took a turn across the deck, and found Lee Fu's eyes fixed on me. 'What else is there to do?' I demanded.

"He considered a while before answering. 'You know Formosa Bank?' I nodded. 'In typhoons, the waves rage on those shallow waters, and no ship lives. You cannot go far in that direction. You will get the wind from the north, shifting to east; and on your lee lies the coast of China. Such a contingency would leave us a regrettably brief time yet to live.'

"'What shall I do? The coast heads me off to the north; and south would be going directly into the face of that black cloud. I'll be hanged if I run toward a storm—couldn't, anyway, until the wind changes.'

"'If you wish, Captain,' said Lee Fu, 'I will take you to a safe anchorage in Chauan Bay.'

"I looked at him in amazement. Take me to an anchorage on a practically uncharted coast, in the face of a typhoon! I'd seen him beat a full-rigged ship through Lymoon Pass, the narrow door to Hong Kong harbor, less than a quarter of a mile wide; I'd seen him carry a vessel out of the middle of the fleet under sternway, with royals set. I knew that he was a consummate master of any sailing craft, that he could have handled my ship perfectly; but I had no reason to sup-

pose, at that time, that his judgment of general conditions on the high seas was better than my own. If I had let him take charge of the *Omega* then, we would have caught only the brush of the storm on the western edge, with a weather shore most of the time. Chauan Bay, I learned later, is deep and well-protected on the north. But I put her out into it, got cornered, as he said I would, and had to anchor on a lee shore in the end.

"We took the wind from about northeast; that told us that the center of the storm was south and east of us, blocking our only way to open water, and moving directly toward us at an uncertain rate. To leeward lay the China coast, in places not over a dozen miles away; if we weren't to make a harbor—and I didn't for a moment consider the possibility—there was nothing for it but to put her head off-shore on the port tack, stand out into the face of the storm, and trust to luck. It might be traveling slowly, in which case we could get across the northern front of it before the center came along; or it might deviate from the theoretical direction, as many typhoons do in the Formosa Channel, and miss us altogether. In any case, we had to have sea-room. For a number of hours the wind held within bounds; I was able to keep considerable sail on the ship up to midnight, when we were obliged to shorten down and heave her to. In that time, however, we must have made some thirty miles of offing.

"But I won't go into the details of that typhoon. It was a terrific blow. From midnight till noon of the next day, we lay hove-to on the port tack, without a change of wind; the center of the storm was coming toward us, but must have been moving very slowly. The sea, in those rather shallow waters, made up to a tremendous size; I began to be frightened for the ship. Half of the time she seemed buried, submerged; the immense waves stood above her and inundated her decks in constant succession, like the overflow from a great waterfall. Lee Fu kept the deck with me all day, wrapped in a long oilskin coat. Side by side we clung to the

rail. Talk was out of the question; we hung on grimly, fought with the wind for our breath, and waited for the hours to go.

"We were coming through it very nicely, too, when, along in the latter part of the day, the wind began to veer into the east. It meant that the center was passing inshore to south of us; and, with plenty of sea-room, I couldn't have asked for a more favorable turn. But, after drifting for a good twelve hours, we had no idea within many miles of our position; and this shift of wind was driving us directly inshore. Of that we were certain; the whole coast of China lay there on our lee to catch us, perhaps fifty miles away, perhaps fifteen. The storm was moving so slowly that the wind might hold in this quarter for hours; a question of its blowing itself out, so that we could get sail on the ship, before it had blown us ashore. And night was coming on.

"Lee Fu edged up to me, and put his lips close to my ears. 'Anchors . . . ready . . . chains,' I heard. 'They weren't unshackled,' I screamed. 'We can shove them off the forecastle.' I made a prying motion with my hand. He nodded, and turned away.

"There was nothing to do but wait. The wind came in fierce squalls, with undiminished violence. It held in the east. Night fell, a solid blackness, hideous with the incessant roar and crash of the seas. Moment by moment we were driving in toward the land.

"When a couple of hours must have passed I felt Lee Fu's hand on my arm. A lull came, and I heard him distinctly: *'shoal water!'* I had noticed the fearful jerking of the vessel, that could mean only a shortened sea. In the appalling darkness I leaned forward to listen; and suddenly a new note came to my ears, breaking across the thunder of the storm, it was a sharp, insistent note, pounding through the gale like the slat of a sail adrift; a faint sound, but perfectly distinguishable, as if a mouth were whispering horrible words

close to my ear. Breakers! We had used up our distance, and were on the lee shore.

"How we got the masts cut away I can't remember. I've a recollection of lifting an ax to strike at the mizzen rigging, and having it snatched away by the wind before I could bring it down. I sawed the lanyards off with my pocket knife. Lee Fu attended to the main. These two masts went clean at the deck; the foremast went at the masthead. The mate and second mate must have gone overboard at this time, among the wreckage; we never saw them again.

"Then we were on the forecastle-head, prying at the anchors with capstan-bars. After a long, long time—a time that seemed ages, we got them both over the side. My crew, all Chinamen, worked well. We had lost the sound of the breakers; I couldn't understand it. All at once, as we swung around, we were in the midst of them. In the morning, when we were able to look around and get our bearing, I saw how it had been. We rode not two ship's lengths from the rocks; though we had probably dragged in the latter part of the night. When she lifted her stern on the pitch of a swell, we looked across a mile or two of bleak and ragged country; and in the offing, directly ahead of us, lay a nest of black rocks, sticking up ten or twenty feet above the breakers. These snags had given us the warning; we'd been by before we had heard them —must have passed them within a hundred yards. So it had been none too soon that our anchors had bit the night before, at the end of every inch of chain that we had in the lockers.

"Did any of you fellows ever ride out a hurricane at anchor in an open seaway? We lay like a huge log of wood, wallowing low in the water; and every sea broke clean over us from bow to stern, exactly as a comber curls over a man bathing on the beach. How my crew saved themselves, how Lee Fu and I got aft, what happened to any of us, I have no idea. Some time later, as I was clinging to the rail by the quarter-bitts, I found Lee Fu at my side. There was no use

in taking such punishment; if the anchors held and the ship kept afloat, we would come through; if not, we couldn't reach the shore alive by any possible chance. I nodded my head in the direction of the companionway; and when the next lull came—what passed for a lull in that hell of wind and water—we managed to get the door open and scramble below.

"In the shelter of the cabin, after many hours on deck, the scene seemed strange. The motions of the ship were inhuman, like the writhings of a tortured man. We couldn't anticipate the next jump—would be flung suddenly forward, or our feet would be knocked from under us without warning. Standing braced in the doorway of his room, Lee Fu took off his oilskin coat and wiped his face. His embroidered garments were drenched and stained; I noticed that he had broken two of his long finger-nails. Not an expression disturbed the placidity of his face; an idea crossed my mind, that he was making preparations for bed. He could have done that, too, and slept comfortably; death was nothing but death—why be disturbed? But another matter of the body interested him more; while I struggled to get out of my own wet clothes, he made his way into the forward cabin, and soon returned with a loaf of bread and a jar of marmalade. There were a few tins of sardines and a case of beer, in a locker under the starboard couch; we braced our feet against the big chair screwed to the deck, and made a hearty meal. I hadn't stopped to think how hungry and thirsty I had been.

"'It looks like a slim chance, Lee Fu,' I said, listening to the turmoil overhead and around us. 'I'm afraid that this is the finish of all things.'

"'Such talk is nonsense,' he answered sharply. 'The matter is now beyond us, in the hands of the gods. It should concern us no longer.'

"I smiled. 'The anchors took hold, anyway. My anchors and chains are heavy, for a vessel of the *Omega's* size.'

"Lee Fu got up, handed himself over to the chart table, took a pack of cards and a cribbage board from the drawer,

and brought them to the couch. 'Captain, let us play,' he said.

"My heart turned against it. 'How can I?' I demanded. 'Listen to that! . . . Not just now.'

" 'Nevertheless, force yourself,' he said. 'Play.'

"So we played.

III

"The wind screamed overhead all night; the ship wallowed and plunged, groaning at every seam; the seas thundered upon her and roared along her decks. We sat on the starboard couch, playing cribbage; strange as it may seem, the game helped me through the night. Or perhaps it was the quiet influence of a man whose soul was sure. At dawn the typhoon broke; and we were still afloat. We lay as I've told you with our stern brushing the rocks; the spot couldn't have been more exposed. We had fetched up against a long point that ran southerly like a breakwater, in front of a deep bay. Off to the southeast was the reef of rocks that we had passed as we drifted in; a row of jagged teeth, gnashing themselves at our escape. The point was barren and deserted; we saw no human being on the land. Something about the situation seemed uncanny; the sea rolled in heavily from the open Channel, bursting with a continual roar on the iron ledges astern; and there we rode, in ten fathoms of water with muddy bottom, almost touching the land, and yet cut off from it—a land of which we knew nothing and could learn nothing, but which had the appearance, as we examined it, of a mysterious new continent, as yet undiscovered and uninhabited by man. A weird coast, gray and gloomy, without a tree or a sign of green: had we been blown off the good old earth altogether, to some demoniac shore? My nerves were on edge: more than once that day, as I glanced astern, I felt that unseen eyes might be watching me, that evil things might be going on in the deep and dark caverns of that broken land.

"And still there was nothing for us to do. The ship didn't leak badly; a few hours' pumping through the day kept her free. As for a jury rig, the best that I could hope to do would be to get up something at the fore, enough to run her back to Hong Kong before the northeast monsoon, when it set in. I figured, from the time we'd been hove-to, that we must have landed somewhere along the coast between Swa-tau and Hong Hai Bay; I knew that we couldn't very well be to the westward of Hong Kong. But my mate and second mate were missing, I myself was completely fagged, and my Chinese crew, good enough at handling the vessel, would have been heavy at a rigging job; the sea continued high, and there would have been little prospect of accomplishing much anyway; so I decided to rest fore and aft through that day, and be ready for real work the next morning. I longed for more room under our stern, but couldn't have moved the ship in such a sea; hesitated to heave her ahead on the chains, for fear of starting something; and meanwhile comforted myself with the knowledge that she had held in this position through the worst of the typhoon.

"Night came on, dark as a pocket; I set an anchor-watch, though nothing afloat would be liable to bother us, and went below for a much-needed nap. I slept soundly till midnight; when I got up, Lee Fu sat reading in the after cabin.

"'Haven't you been asleep, Lee Fu?' I asked in surprise. 'Why don't you put up your book and turn in?'

"'I am wakeful, Captain,' he said. 'I have just come down from the deck. The wind has gone and the sea is dropping fast. She rides beautifully.'

"'What's worrying you?' I asked, as I went by him. The question was fortuitous; I made it without thought, expected no answer, got none, and went on my way. I spent five or ten minutes on deck, but couldn't see my hand before me. Off over the water, a few stars had begun to appear through rifts in the heavy clouds. I interviewed my anchor-watch, saw that everything was all right, came aft, listened a mo-

ment at the head of the companion, sniffed the land-smell in the air, and went below.

"'It's devilish dark,' I said to Lee Fu as I came in. 'I prophesy that we have no wind for a day or two.'

"'Yes, very dark,' he said. 'Too dark, in many ways. Captain, shall we play a game of cards?'

"I'd been about to propose the same—wanted to keep awake the rest of the night. We decided to play on the forward cabin table, where a bracket-lamp against the mast gave the best light. Minute by minute as we sat there the sea went down. I felt the ship grow quiet; it seemed very still, too, in the cabins, after the creaking and groaning that had filled our ears so long. My nerves relaxed in the deep silence; life became real, possible, on an even keel again. We had come home to ships and the world, and could settle down once more, forgetful of the inexorable destiny. I leaned back on the settee, and lost game after game of cribbage with the best of grace.

"At length Lee Fu looked over at me with a smile. 'We must change the game,' he said. 'Let us try poker. Your luck may be in that to-night.'

"I brushed the cribbage board aside. 'Deal,' I answered.

"He held up a warning hand. 'Listen . . . what was that?'

"Something had struck the ship forward, a dull thudding sound. We felt a slight shock pass along the deck under our feet. My first rapid thought was that she had gone adrift, and touched the bottom; then I knew that it couldn't be. The touch of a ship on bottom is distinctive, unmistakable; it travels up your spine, jars your teeth, speaks of the solid earth, that seems to stiffen and rise against the least impact of a floating vessel. This was a hollow sound, a bump, a shock of wood on wood. Something alongside . . . a boat, a vessel . . . a junk. I leaped to my feet. At the same instant from forward came a wild and long-drawn yell.

"Lee Fu blocked my way to the door. 'Do not go out!' he said sharply. 'This is what I feared.'

"'What?' I cried. Feet were pattering overhead along the house. A frantic howling had risen forward—sharp screams of pain and terror—awful sounds.

"'Sit down,' said Lee Fu calmly. 'It is useless now. Sit down!' He forced me back on to the settee.

"'In the name of God, what is it?' I cried.

"'Men from shore—wreckers, thieves, pirates,' he replied. 'I knew that they would come.'

"'Pirates!' I exclaimed. 'Here—now—in this day?' I hadn't been many years then in the China Sea.

"'In lonely places, Captain,' said Lee Fu, 'this day is not different from any other day.'

"'Why didn't you warn me?'

"'What would have been the use? I hoped that we were not seen; but it makes no matter. We are helpless, at their mercy. They can come in thousands. Hundreds of them are now on board your ship.'

"I gripped his arm. 'What are they doing forward?' I asked.

"'Killing the men,' said Lee Fu. 'They are already beyond our aid.'

"I caught my breath and stood up, listening. In the acute silence I heard loud whispers, muttering voices, and the swish of bare feet in the alleyway. Suddenly the unearthly yelling broke out again, nearer now, in the waist of the ship. I started for the door, and paused, absolutely undone.

"'Lee Fu, I must go out,' I said.

"He had seated himself again at the table, and was dealing out two hands of cards. Tapping with his long nails on the polished wood, he glanced up at me. 'Do you wish to die?' he asked. 'You would never carry your head through the companion door. Sit down.'

"'Die?' I cried wildly. 'For God's sake, what's the use of staying here? The cabin isn't locked; there isn't a key in a door!'

"'I know,' he answered in an even voice. 'Sit down, and

we will play a game—the game of life and death. Be quiet, and sit down!'

"I dropped into my seat without volition. It's impossible to impart to you the singular horror of those few moments. I felt, I remember, as if I had been drugged into a state of semi-consciousness; a succession of events had in some way become enormously distorted, hideously changed, like things seen at the height of a fever. I sat inert and numb, hearing clearly the gathering of stealthy forces on deck—scufflings, noises of many feet, sharp words, startling and unintelligible cries. Then I picked up the five cards that Lee Fu had dealt me, and gazed at them like a man in a dream.

"Some time must have passed while we sat listening—while we sat absolutely motionless, facing each other and holding our cards. Faint sounds broke out now in the after cabin; we heard lowered voices behind the two closed doors. My eyes wandered—rested at last on Lee Fu's face. He was looking at his cards. He carefully picked out three of them and threw them on the table.

"'How many will you have?' he asked, his voice at its ordinary pitch, clear and undisturbed. Suddenly he leaned across the table, and his eyes opened wide, showing the depths that are seldom revealed. 'Play, for the sake of your God!' he whispered fiercely. 'Much depends upon you. Play!'

"I selected a card at random and threw it down. As I drew out a second card, I became aware instinctively that we were not alone. I felt the power of eyes . . . then heard the creaking of the hinges as the doors that led into the after cabin opened quietly. Heard, too, a mutter from across the table—*'Do not turn.'* No fear of that—I didn't dare; but in a flash of understanding his idea had come to me. I took a physical grip, as it were, of every nerve in my body, and threw down the second card.

"'I will take two cards,' I said, in the best voice that I could muster.

"I believe that nothing in heaven or earth could have

stopped them from rushing at us, but the very unexpectedness of what they found. They had been gathering, assembling, preparing themselves for an attack—one can well imagine. One can see them crouching aft, fearing to open the companion door—stealing at length down the companionway, astonished at the quiet, peering into my room, into the two cabin staterooms, exchanging swift glances, whispering their amazement—pausing suddenly, as they heard voices in the forward cabin—listening—finally opening the door. The picture framed there must have excited their surprise—two men, one a Chinaman, one a European playing earnestly at cards, while all around them death stalked and blood was flowing. It was a dramatic masterpiece. But I saw as I sat there with a thousand thoughts surging through my brain, that Lee Fu was bidding for a still higher trump, striking a deeper note than would appear. He was making an appeal to a national characteristic. These Chinamen!—their lives are games of cards. There in the forward cabin, the first hand of a tremendous struggle was played. I looked again at Lee Fu, saw him turn his head slowly; followed his glance, and beheld the after cabin doors filled with staring faces and half-naked forms, arrested, as it were, on the threshold of a great and absorbing mystery. Lee Fu regarded them coldly; then raised his hand in a gesture commanding silence, and turned his impenetrable visage back to the game.

"We played slowly, intensely; my head seemed tight, and it took me a long while to operate my cards. As we played, Chinamen by the dozen filed silently into the room, sliding behind the settees, crowding against the walls, watching us catlike with their flat beady eyes. One glance at them had been enough. But their presence enthralled me; it took all the power of my will to hold my attention to the game. While I riveted my eyes on the cards I saw constantly a picture of the men standing opposite me. I wanted to look at them, I itched to look at them; but something told me that I mustn't. I saw them just the same—can never forget them. They

stood closely pressed together, line behind line of evil faces, breathing down upon us, a cruel and bloodthirsty guard; while we played for the minutes as they passed, like men working desperately in a nightmare over some extravagant and useless business.

"Lee Fu won steadily. I happened to have a large sum of money about me, that I'd carried to use on the ship, and had no safe place to tuck away in; and this I doled out dollar by dollar. The pile on the opposite side of the table soon grew to considerable proportions. Now and then the trace of a smile crossed Lee Fu's face. They saw it; by the tone of the whispered comment that went on behind my back, I knew that they despised my weakness at the game. Cold sweat stood on my forehead; and that helped too, because I seemed to be taking my loss hard. As a matter of fact, I was grinding my teeth to keep from shouting aloud. I thought, without exaggeration, that I'd go mad. There was something sickening about the awful business; it seemed so utterly hopeless to me. The stink of those Chinamen was abominable, too.

"At length I put up my last dollar, and Lee Fu won. I leaned back, and looked across the table littered with cards; waited there, like a man with his head on the block. The belly of a Chinaman pressed against my shoulders; I braced my feet under the table, and held back with all my strength. This was the end of the rope—and I was anxious enough to have it over with.

"Then Lee Fu without a tremor took up the second hand of the bigger game. Pointing with a clawlike forefinger to a man standing near the head of the table, he motioned him toward my seat.

" 'Sit down and play,' he said, in the Canton dialect that he had taught me.

"Nothing could have been more daring, more opportune. They had been watching us, whetting their appetites; seeing the white man lose, too, and the Chinaman win. Their gambling spirit had been thoroughly aroused. And now, at the

height of the interest, the game was suddenly cut off; and as suddenly, an opportunity was offered for its renewal. An opportunity, moreover, with the interest enormously multiplied, with the possibilities of excitement increased beyond bounds. I stood up; and without a word the other man, as if drawn by a magnet, took my place opposite Lee Fu.

"I noticed him for the first time then. He was undoubtedly the leader of the crew. His face was intelligent, his whole appearance far above that of the other men, who were of the lowest coolie caste. He was dressed like a clerk: white trousers, a short black coat, and a close-fitting black cap. Lee Fu's eyes, it seems, had been busy while he played.

"I moved toward the head of the table, surrounded by wet, slimy bodies; and the two Chinamen began to play. The rows of faces on either side of the cabin crowded closer emitting grunts and exclamations of approval. Standing there at the heart of this extraordinary scene, I seemed to drift off into a region of total unsubstantiality. For a long while my thoughts were wandering and inattentive; I tried to retrace the last few hours, to piece the crazy circumstances together; and as I worked my way up to the present situation, I gradually became aware that I was witnessing a rare and powerful exhibition—a battle in the air. Men have paid heavily to see the wonders of art, to hear music played, to be touched to the core by a perfection of illusion. Well, here was the reality . . . and free, too, or maybe bought at the final and complete price which opens still more mysterious doors. And I was touched, believe me! I was thrilled in every nerve, by waves, by surges of emotion; I was dazzled, staggered, appalled, at the fearfulness of the stroke, and at its diabolical cleverness. For I saw at last the full value of the stake for which my friend Lee Fu Chang played.

"They sat with the cards between them, absolutely quiescent save for the movements of their hands. Their faces were inscrutable. As I watched them, I felt like a man trying to read deep and pregnant words on a blank page. With all

their immobility, they didn't give an impression of indifference. Far from it. Behind those placid countenances revealing no trace of thought the imagination was stirred to discern a veritable ocean of sensations and ideas: in one, watchfulness that mustn't show in the eyes, anxiety that mustn't influence a decision, hope and impatience that mustn't outreach themselves, despair that mustn't creep into the voice; plans and plans, being advanced, analyzed, weighed, approved or thrown aside; the consummate game itself being carried on without hesitation or mistake; and all concealed behind the veil: in the other, surprise, distrust, excitement, keen curiosity, and supreme carelessness, for of course there was no danger to himself in any possible outcome. . . . Think of it, you fellows! These two men, both of the incomprehensible race whose real life goes on beyond our horizon—these two playing a game for pleasure, as it seemed, playing to pass the time; and yet throwing into the scene by the very incongruity of their nerveless attitudes, the glamour of a hidden and deathly struggle, a combat of the secret, elemental forces of the mind. It was stunning, marvelous . . . and terrible. Not a covert glance, not a twitch of a muscle, not a quickened breath. They were the sum and expression of complete impersonality. And, to add the crowning touch, I saw that each perfectly understood the other—understood that the mask before him screened all that moves in the human heart and soul."

Nichols paused in his tale; someone touched my elbow, and I found a Chinaman bending above me. I started from my chair. It was the steward offering drinks on a tray.

"Nichols, you've woven a spell," I said.

He sipped his liquor in silence, then gave a smile. "The European nerves," he said. "Imagination . . . without control. Don't deny the Chinaman the imagination, or the nerves, either; but acknowledge how overwrought you are. You are the slave, instead of the master. You should take a lesson from my friend Lee Fu Chang.

"While the game went on, more and more men kept filing into the forward cabin. I was shoved against the edge of the table; I could feel them pressing behind me, coming down the forward companionway. There must have been fifty cutthroats about us; the after cabin was full, too, and you could hear them passing word of the game back to the rear. Their faces were savage, brutish, ferocious; they grunted and snarled, baring white teeth; they leered at me malevolently, thrusting their yellow visages forward to catch my attention. I returned their scrutiny with a blank gaze, glanced to my left, and saw extended a smooth yellow arm, dripping with blood; shuddered, and turned my eyes back to the game.

"The leader of the crew had pulled from some inside pocket a bag of coin, a considerable sum of money. He was no stranger to the game. My head had cleared now, with the removal of the dreadful necessity for action; I was able to follow and grasp the details of what was going on. Considered apart, the delicacy of the game was amazing; you who have never seen Chinamen play poker can hardly appreciate it. It seemed to make no difference what they held—they didn't depend on the cards. Bluff was the game. Time and again they bet on hands that any one of us would have thrown down; and both having the same style of attack, as you might say, the same daring, the same abandon, it was surprising how often they matched with nothing and clashed over empty hands.

"Knowing what was in his mind, I saw after a little while that the honors went to Lee Fu Chang. At the opening of the game he had won a few hands; and immediately afterward had lost heavily, to an accompaniment of guttural cries from the infernal crew. Then he had begun to win again, slowly —so slowly that with each gain he held the gambling spirit of his countrymen, with each loss he drew them farther on. Like a man manipulating the fine wires of some instrument, he played surely, cunningly this masterful double game.

His adversary, it soon developed, was a poker-player to be reckoned with. How to clean him out, and yet keep the flame alive among his men; more than this, how to lash them, madden them, intoxicate them, so that at the last the flame would burn brightest:—here was a problem for all acuteness and power. The strain upon me, though I had nothing but a passive part, was terrific.

"But after suspense that seemed to be stretched out through long hours, standing there and watching Lee Fu's winnings ebb and flow, the tide coming in each time with an amount slightly increased, I felt approaching the culmination that he desired. It was in the air—he had them! I knew it from sudden movements of the crowd, from the rapid shuffling of feet, from the swaying of shoulders and the jerking of heads, from smothered but violent words. Slight things, but evidences of an excitement barely controlled. It was in the air. They had forgotten life, gain, and the business of the night; they were mad with the game.

"Lee Fu picked up his hand, and glanced across at his opponent's resources. They were growing very small.

" 'I want no cards,' he said. 'I will bet five dollars.'

"The other drew two cards, examined them, and slipped his hand together into a neat pack.

" 'Five dollars more,' he said.

"The betting continued; we leaned forward above the table. Ten twenty, fifty dollars—at length Lee Fu's opponent threw down his last dollar, and called. He spread out his cards before him one by one, a flush in hearts.

" 'I have a full house,' said Lee Fu, showing his cards, and raking the pile toward his side of the table.

"The other man got up. Lee Fu sat motionless, silently regarding him. He seemed lost in thought; his hands played with the heap of silver and gold on the table. I held my breath. A moment passed, a finespun interval. Suddenly Lee Fu spoke in a voice of fire.

" 'Sit down!' he said. 'I will give you a stake worth play-

ing for. I will bet all that is here, many dollars, all that I have; together with two lives, and a fine ship of European build. If you win, they are yours, to do with as you will. But if I win, you and your men are to leave us as you found us, and go. Now we will play . . . one hand. Sit down!'

"The Chinaman seemed to break and falter—turned to his men, speaking in a rapid patter of dialect. I caught a few words. An argument was going on; they didn't fully understand the offer and the terms. But when he had spoken for a time, I saw their eagerness shining in their eyes. An explosion of cries burst out; wiry arms shot forth, pointing toward the table and the game. The man sat down. His face for a moment lost its immobility; he stretched out his hands like a man inspired.

"'Play!' he cried.

"Swifter than thought, Lee Fu had dealt the cards. He picked up his hand, held it before him an instant, selected deliberately one card, and threw it away; the other four he made into a pack, and placed face downward on the table. I thought rapidly. He might be holding two pair; he might be hoping to complete a flush, with a number of chances; or he might be bidding for a straight, in which case his hand would be worthless if one particular card didn't come his way. I tried to read his face. Anything to end the awful suspense—hope or despair, it didn't much matter. But only the blank page confronted me.

"The other had thrown away two cards. My instant thought was that he held three of a kind. They would beat Lee Fu's two pair—would beat anything that Lee Fu held now, for who could hope to complete a scattered hand at such a pass? We were beaten already. And yet . . .

"Without a word, Lee Fu dealt his adversary two cards; then took the next card on the pack, his card, and calmly looked at it. A glance was enough—he placed it face downward on the top of the other four. A pause fell, and the eyes of the two men met across the table.

"Until that instant I hadn't realized the added grimness of this hand. There was to be no betting, no issue of personalities, no escape from the decree—nothing but luck, the cold and unchangeable cards. We lost or we won. Life hung by a hair. . . . I watched it straining. And yet, some of the madness of the game must have taken hold even of me; for I remember that, as I waited for their eyes to finish the battle, my nerves quieted and my heart grew still. Beyond the bounds of terror lies a realm of delirious and ghastly joy.

"The outlaw laid down his cards. He held a straight flush in spades, headed by the queen.

"Wonderful luck!—he had completed this hand with two cards out; he had not held three of a kind. Irresistible luck—fatal luck. I gasped, and my eyes wandered to Lee Fu. Perhaps I felt that in the stress of our predicament, the emotions that gripped me might at last find an answer there. His face was placid, smooth, serene, like the face of a Buddha carved out of soft stone. Meditatively, he picked up the little pack of his hand and turned the upper card, the card that he had drawn. It was the ace of hearts. He turned the others slowly, placing the cards in a methodical row, his eyes on each card as it fell, as if confirming the miracle for his own satisfaction—king, queen, knave, and ten-spot, all of hearts. He had completed a royal flush, the highest combination that the cards afford.

IV

"I leaned against the table, faint and exhausted. The two men stood up, facing each other. Lee Fu waved a hand, a slight gesture toward the cards. The tiers of faces pressed forward, gazing wildly, incredulously. A murmur ran through the room, increasing to a spluttering outburst of jargon. The leader cried out sharply: the uproar ceased. For some seconds a tense silence held, while they looked their fill.

"Then Lee Fu's opponent raised his hand, and uttered a command. The yellow forms began to stream past me, making for the forward companionway; I felt them brush my elbows, I smelled their breath as they muttered imprecations in my face; some of them spat at me. They melted from the room like ghosts, furtive and noiseless; before I had taken my eyes from the cards that had spelled out deliverance we were alone with the leader of the crew.

"He rested his hands on the table, devouring the cards with his gaze. He was loath to leave. A shout came down the companion. He started, dragged himself to the door, and turned. There, as if overcome by the inadequacy of all speech and expression, he made a hopeless movement with his shoulders, and suddenly was gone. We stood like wooden images, hearing his thick-soled shoes clatter up the stairs.

"They were gone. I sank to the settee, bolt upright, and waited in an appalling silence—waited and listened, fearing that what had come to pass was only another trick of fate, expecting minute by minute that they would be back, armed with death . . . that they were already turning, gathering outside the door. Lee Fu stood above his marvelous cards, without motion or sound. Ten minutes must have gone by. But after those departing steps on the stairs we heard no more. They had vanished whence they came. They had slunk off like men in fear, like men rebuked by fate; they had withdrawn quietly, hoping to be unobserved of the gods, ere they had overstepped too far the forbidden line. They had incurred dire penalties; they had opposed one obviously under divine protection. Me, the white devil, they had hated; they had spat upon me. But they had left me alive, and gone. I bowed my head on the table, and let my nerves have their run.

"When I looked up, Lee Fu was fingering the pile of coin that was the least of his winnings. He spread both hands flat upon it, and pressed down, thinking his own thoughts. With a rush, the realization, the awakening, came to me. He

had won all—*all!* The ship, our lives . . . and this, too, the last straw. Reckoned by the coin of the earth, he had made a good night of it. He had won perhaps a thousand dollars; he had cleaned them out. These men had stood beside us, filling the cabin, ready to strike us down; they had left with us, as it were, a few slight tokens—their ready money and their odor; and they were *gone.* They had returned to the barren, unnatural country of their habitation; a shore of death, defended by outlying reefs—a land where no man was seen to move by day. Before God, if it hadn't been for what we found, I could have discredited my best senses, could have doubted their reality altogether.

"After an hour of waiting we went on deck, and picked our way cautiously forward among the wreckage. The ship seemed deserted. I lit a lantern in the galley; the first ray of light along the deck disclosed the reason of the deep silence. We were alone on the vessel, Lee Fu and I. My Chinamen had been killed to the last man. They lay in hideous postures, as if thrown down violently from a great height. A pile of bodies choked each forecastle door. The knife had done it all.

"I staggered aft, and walked blindly down the port alleyway, trying to get as far off as I could. The lantern had gone out; I remember that I flung it overboard. A puff of cool land-breeze, thick with the odor of flowers, came across the water. Life seemed very sweet. Land was near—I smelled it. The world waited for me; it was still the same. When we touch death with our finger-tips, and feel how cold it is, we discover that we're all selfish beasts at heart. I drank in deep draughts of living air, and gloried in the postponement of my dissolution, in the opportunity to follow for a while longer the trivial round of my habits and affairs.

" 'Lee Fu, I have to thank you for my life,' I said. He had ranged up beside me at the rail.

" 'No, no, Captain," he remonstrated. 'You do not understand. The gods have favored us.'

"'No one but you,' I said, 'could have played and won that game.'

"'My friend," answered Lee Fu, 'the gods were trying me. I felt it, and had faith. Your European way is very bad. You would have taken upon yourself the work of the gods, and solved your own destiny. You would have flourished your revolver, and shot a few; and finally many would have killed you in horrible ways, as you have seen. An uninteresting method, you admit. It seemed better to play; and we were amply repaid by the game. As for the matter of winning or losing, that concerned us not at all. I left it entirely with the gods. They sent the cards.'"

Reading List

Stories of Character: Individual.

Aldrich, Thomas Bailey. "Goliath."
Allen, James Lane. "Old King Solomon of Kentucky."
Aumonier, Stacy. "The Friends," "Old Iron."
Barrie, James M., "The Inconsiderate Waiter."
Beach, Rex. "Laughing Bill Hyde."
Brown, Alice. "White Pebbles," "A Question of Wills," "The Widow's Third."
Canfield, Dorothy. "The Bedquilt."
Cobb, Irvin. "Quality Folks," "The Smart Aleck," "The Great Auk."
Coppée, François. "The Captain's Vices."
Daudet, Alphonse. "The Siege of Berlin."
Davis, Richard Harding. "The Consul," "The Derelict."
Ferber, Edna. "Old Lady Mandle," "The Gay Old Dog," "The Eldest."
France, Anatole. "The Procurator of Judæa," "Our Lady's Juggler."
Freeman, Mary E. Wilkins. "The Ring with the Green Stone."
Galsworthy, John. "Quality."
Garland, Hamlin. "Black Ephraim," "Lucretia Burns."
James, Henry. "The Real Thing."
Jewett, Sarah O. "The Queen's Twin."
Kipling, Rudyard. "A Second-Rate Woman," "A Bank Fraud."
London, Jack. "Samuel," "Like Argus of the Ancient Times."
Martin, George M. "The Right Promethean Fire."

MAUPASSANT, GUY DE. "Le Mère Sauvage," "Two Friends."
MORRIS, GOUVERNEUR. "Simon L'Ouvrier."
PARKER, GILBERT. "The Derelict," "Dibbs, R. N."
PERTWEE, ROLAND. "The Big Chance," "The Eliphalet Touch," "The Last Curtain."
SMITH, GORDON. "The Pagan," "Feet of Gold."
STEVENSON, ROBERT L. "A Lodging for the Night."
TARKINGTON, BOOTH. "The Beautiful Lady."
TURGENEV, IVAN. "The Jew," "A Lear of the Steppes."
VAN LOAN, CHARLES E. "Scrap Iron," "Mister Conley," "The Squirrel," "The Bone Doctor."

THE BELLED BUZZARD *

By Irvin Cobb

There was a swamp known as Little Niggerwool, to distinguish it from Big Niggerwool, which lay across the river. It was traversable only by those who knew it well—an oblong stretch of tawny mud and tawny water, measuring maybe four miles its longest way and two miles roughly at its widest; and it was full of cypress and stunted swamp oak, with edgings of canebrake and rank weeds; and in one place, where a ridge crossed it from side to side, it was snaggled like an old jaw with dead tree trunks, rising close-ranked and thick as teeth. It was untenanted of living things—except, down below, there were snakes and mosquitoes, and a few wading and swimming fowl; and up above, those big woodpeckers that the country people called logcocks—larger than pigeons, with flaming crests and spiky tails—swooping in their long, loping flight from snag to snag, always just out of gunshot of the chance invader, and uttering a strident cry which matched those surroundings so fitly that it might well have been the voice of the swamp itself.

On one side Little Niggerwool drained its saffron waters off into a sluggish creek, where summer ducks bred, and on the other it ended abruptly at a natural bank of high ground, along which the county turnpike ran. The swamp came right up to the road and thrust its fringe of reedy, weedy undergrowth forward as though in challenge to the good farm lands

* From *The Escape of Mr. Trimm;* copyright, 1913, by George H. Doran Company. Reprinted by permission of the author and the publishers.

that were spread beyond the barrier. At the time I am speaking of it was midsummer, and from these canes and weeds and waterplants there came a smell so rank as almost to be overpowering. They grew thick as a curtain, making a blank green wall taller than a man's head.

Along the dusty stretch of road fronting the swamp nothing living had stirred for half an hour or more. And so at length the weed-stems rustled and parted, and out from among them a man came forth silently and cautiously. He was an old man—an old man who had once been fat, but with age had grown lean again, so that now his skin was by odds too large for him. It lay on the back of his neck in folds. Under the chin he was pouched like a pelican and about the jowls was wattled like a turkey gobbler.

He came out upon the road slowly and stopped there, switching his legs absently with the stalk of a horseweed. He was in his shirtsleeves—a respectable, snuffy old figure; evidently a man deliberate in words and thoughts and actions. There was something about him suggestive of an old staid sheep that had been engaged in a clandestine transaction and was afraid of being found out.

He had made amply sure no one was in sight before he came out of the swamp, but now, to be doubly certain, he watched the empty road—first up, then down—for a long half minute, and fetched a sighing breath of satisfaction. His eyes fell upon his feet, and, taken with an idea, he stepped back to the edge of the road and with a wisp of crabgrass wiped his shoes clean of the swamp mud, which was of a different color and texture from the soil of the upland. All his life Squire H. B. Gathers had been a careful, canny man, and he had need to be doubly careful on this summer morning. Having disposed of the mud on his feet, he settled his white straw hat down firmly upon his head, and, crossing the road, he climbed a stake-and-rider fence laboriously and went plodding sedately across a weedfield and up a slight slope toward his house, half a mile away, upon the crest of the little hill.

He felt perfectly natural—not like a man who had just taken a fellowman's life—but natural and safe, and well satisfied with himself and with his morning's work. And he was safe; that was the main thing—absolutely safe. Without hitch or hindrance he had done the thing for which he had been planning and waiting and longing all these months. There had been no slip or mischance; the whole thing had worked out as plainly and simply as two and two make four. No living creature except himself knew of the meeting in the early morning at the head of Little Niggerwool, exactly where the squire had figured they should meet; none knew of the device by which the other man had been lured deeper and deeper in the swamp to the exact spot where the gun was hidden. No one had seen the two of them enter the swamp; no one had seen the squire emerge three hours later, alone.

The gun, having served its purpose, was hidden again, in a place no mortal eye would ever discover. Face downward, with a hole between his shoulderblades, the dead man was lying where he might lie undiscovered for months or for years, or forever. His pedler's pack was buried in the mud so deep that not even the probing crawfishes could find it. He would never be missed probably. There was but the slightest likelihood that inquiry would ever be made for him—let alone a search. He was a stranger and a foreigner, the dead man was, whose comings and goings made no great stir in the neighborhood, and whose failure to come again would be taken as a matter of course—just one of those shiftless, wandering Dagoes, here today and gone tomorrow. That was one of the best things about it—these Dagoes never had any people in this country to worry about them or look for them when they disappeared. And so it was all over and done with, and nobody the wiser. The squire clapped his hands together briskly with the air of a man dismissing a subject from his mind for good, and mended his gait.

He felt no stabbings of conscience. On the contrary, a glow of gratification filled him. His house was saved from

scandal; his present wife would philander no more—before his very eyes—with these young Dagoes, who came from nobody knew where, with packs on their backs and persuasive wheedling tongues in their heads. At this thought the squire raised his head and considered his homestead. It looked good to him—the small white cottage among the honey locusts, with beehives and flower beds about it; the tidy whitewashed fence; the sound outbuildings at the back, and the well-tilled acres roundabout.

At the fence he halted and turned about, carelessly and casually, and looked back along the way he had come. Everything was as it should be—the weedfield steaming in the heat; the empty road stretching along the crooked ridge like a long gray snake sunning itself; and beyond it, massing up, the dark, cloaking stretch of swamp. Everything was all right, but—— The squire's eyes, in their loose sacs of skin, narrowed and squinted. Out of the blue arch away over yonder a small black dot had resolved itself and was swinging to and fro, like a mote. A buzzard—hey? Well, there were always buzzards about on a clear day like this. Buzzards were nothing to worry about—almost any time you could see one buzzard, or a dozen buzzards if you were a mind to look for them.

But this particular buzzard now—wasn't he making for Little Niggerwool? The squire did not like the idea of that. He had not thought of the buzzards until this minute. Sometimes when cattle strayed the owners had been known to follow the buzzards, knowing mighty well that if the buzzards led the way to where the stray was, the stray would be past the small salvage of hide and hoofs—but the owner's doubts would be set at rest for good and all.

There was a grain of disquiet in this. The squire shook his head to drive the thought away—yet it persisted, coming back like a midge dancing before his face. Once at home, however, Squire Gathers deported himself in a perfectly normal manner. With the satisfied proprietorial eye of an elderly husband who has no rivals, he considered his young wife,

busied about her household duties. He sat in an easy-chair upon his front gallery and read his yesterday's *Courier-Journal* which the rural carrier had brought him; but he kept stepping out into the yard to peer up into the sky and all about him. To the second Mrs. Gathers he explained that he was looking for weather signs. A day as hot and still as this one was a regular weather breeder; there ought to be rain before night.

"Maybe so," she said; "but looking's not going to bring rain."

Nevertheless the squire continued to look. There was really nothing to worry about; still at midday he did not eat much dinner, and before his wife was half through with hers he was back on the gallery. His paper was cast aside and he was watching. The original buzzard—or, anyhow, he judged it was the first one he had seen—was swinging back and forth in great pendulum swings, but closer down toward the swamp —closer and closer—until it looked from that distance as though the buzzard flew almost at the level of the tallest snags there. And on beyond this first buzzard, coursing above him, were other buzzards. Were there four of them? No; there were five—five in all.

Such is the way of the buzzard—that shifting black question mark which punctuates a Southern sky. In the woods a shoat or a sheep or a horse lies down to die. At once, coming seemingly out of nowhere, appears a black spot, up five hundred feet or a thousand in the air. In broad loops and swirls this dot swings round and round and round, coming a little closer to earth at every turn and always with one particular spot upon the earth for the axis of its wheel. Out of space also other moving spots emerge and grow larger as they tack and jibe and drop nearer, coming in their leisurely buzzard way to the feast. There is no haste—the feast will wait. If it is a dumb creature that has fallen stricken the grim coursers will sooner or later be assembled about it and alongside it, scrouging ever closer and closer to the dying thing, with awk-

ward out-thrustings of their naked necks and great dust-raising flaps of the huge unkempt wings; lifting their feathered shanks high and stiffly like old crippled grave-diggers in overalls that are too tight—but silent and patient all, offering no attack until the last tremor runs through the stiffening carcass and the eyes glaze over. To humans the buzzard pays a deeper meed of respect—he hangs aloft longer; but in the end he comes. No scavenger shark, no carrion crab, ever chambered more grisly secrets in his digestive processes than this big charnel bird. Such is the way of the buzzard.

The squire missed his afternoon nap, a thing that had not happened in years. He stayed on the front gallery and kept count. Those moving distant black specks typified uneasiness for the squire—not fear exactly, or panic or anything akin to it, but a nibbling, nagging kind of uneasiness. Time and again he said to himself that he would not think about them any more; but he did—unceasingly.

By supper time there were seven of them.

He slept light and slept badly. It was not the thought of that dead man lying yonder in Little Niggerwool that made him toss and fume while his wife snored gently alongside him. It was something else altogether. Finally his stirrings roused her and she asked him drowsily what ailed him. Was he sick? Or bothered about anything?

Irritated, he answered her snappishly. Certainly nothing was bothering him, he told her. It was a hot enough night—wasn't it? And when a man got a little along in life he was apt to be a light sleeper—wasn't that so? Well, then? She turned upon her side and slept again with her light, purring snore. The squire lay awake, thinking hard and waiting for day to come.

At the first faint pink-and-gray glow he was up and out upon the gallery. He cut a comic figure standing there in his shirt in the half light, with the dewlap at his throat dang-

ling grotesquely in the neck opening of the unbuttoned garment, and his bare bowed legs showing, splotched and varicose. He kept his eyes fixed on the skyline below, to the south. Buzzards are early risers too. Presently, as the heavens shimmered with the miracle of sunrise, he could make them out—six or seven, or maybe eight.

An hour after breakfast the squire was on his way down through the weedfield to the county road. he went half eagerly, half unwillingly. He wanted to make sure about those buzzards. It might be that they were aiming for the old pasture at the head of the swamp. There were sheep grazing there—an it might be that a sheep had died. Buzzards were notoriously fond of sheep, when dead. Or, if they were pointed for the swamp, he must satisfy himself exactly what part of the swamp it was. He was at the stake-and-rider fence when a mare came jogging down the road, drawing a rig with a man in it. At sight of the squire in the field the man pulled up.

"Hi, squire!" he saluted. "Goin' somewheres?"

"No; jest knockin' about," the squire said—"jest sorter lookin' the place over."

"Hot agin—ain't it?" said the other.

The squire allowed that it was, for a fact, mighty hot. Commonplaces of gossip followed this—county politics and a neighbor's wife sick of breakbone fever down the road a piece. The subject of crops succeeded inevitably. The squire spoke of the need of rain. Instantly he regretted it, for the other man, who was by way of being a weather wiseacre, cocked his head aloft to study the sky for any signs of clouds.

"Wonder whut all them buzzards are doin' yonder, squire," he said pointing upward with his whipstock.

"Whut buzzards—where?" asked the squire with an elaborate note of carelessness in his voice.

"Right yonder, over Little Niggerwool—see 'em there?"

"Oh, yes," the squire made answer. "Now I see 'em.

They ain't doin' nothin', I reckin—jest flyin' round same as they always do in clear weather."

"Must be somethin' dead over there!" speculated the man in the buggy.

"A hawg probably," said the squire promptly—almost too promptly. "There's likely to be hawgs usin' in Niggerwool. Bristow, over on the other side from here—he's got a big drove of hawgs."

"Well, mebbe so," said the man; "but hawgs is a heap more apt to be feedin' on high ground, seems like to me. Well, I'll be gittin' along towards town. G'day, squire." And he slapped the lines down on the mare's flank and jogged off through the dust.

He could not have suspected anything—that man couldn't. As the squire turned away from the road and headed for his house he congratulated himself upon that stroke of his in bringing in Bristow's hogs; and yet there remained this disquieting note in the situation, that buzzards flying, and especially buzzards flying over Little Niggerwool, made people curious—made them ask questions.

He was half-way across the weedfield when, above the hum of insect life, above the inward clamor of his own busy speculations, there came to his ear dimly and distantly a sound that made him halt and cant his head to one side the better to hear it. Somewhere, a good way off, there was a thin, thready, broken strain of metallic clinking and clanking—an eery ghost-chime ringing. It came nearer and became plainer—tonk-tonk-tonk; then the tonks all running together briskly.

A sheep bell or a cowbell—that was it; but why did it seem to come from overhead, from up in the sky, like? And why did it shift so abruptly from one quarter to another—from left to right and back again to left? And how was it that the clapper seemed to strike so fast? Not even the breachiest of breachy young heifers could be expected to tinkle a cowbell

with such briskness. The squire's eyes searched the earth and the sky, his troubled mind giving to his eye a quick and flashing scrutiny. He had it. It was not a cow at all. It was not anything that went on four legs.

One of the loathly flock had left the others. The orbit of his swing had carried him across the road and over Squire Gathers' land. He was sailing right toward and over the squire now. Craning his flabby neck, the squire could make out the unwholesome contour of the huge bird. He could see the ragged black wings—a buzzard's wings are so often ragged and uneven—and the naked throat; the slim, naked head; the big feet folded up against the dingy belly. And he could see a bell too—an under-sized cowbell—that dangled at the creature's breast and jangled incessantly. All his life nearly Squire Gathers had been hearing about the Belled Buzzard. Now with his own eye he was seeing him.

Once, years and years and years ago, some one trapped a buzzard, and before freeing it clamped about its skinny neck a copper band with a cowbell pendent from it. Since then the bird so ornamented has been seen a hundred times—and heard oftener—over an area as wide as half the continent. It has been reported, now in Kentucky, now in Texas, now in North Carolina—now anywhere between the Ohio River and the Gulf. Cross-roads correspondents take their pens in hand to write to the country papers that on such and such a date, at such a place, So-and-So saw the Belled Buzzard. Always it is the Belled Buzzard, never a belled buzzard. The Belled Buzzard is an institution.

There must be more than one of them. It seems hard to believe that one bird, even a buzzard in his prime, and protected by law in every Southern state and known to be a bird of great age, could live so long and range so far and wear a clinking cowbell all the time! Probably other jokers have emulated the original joker; probably if the truth were known there have been a dozen such; but the country peo-

ple will have it that there is only one Belled Buzzard—a bird that bears a charmed life and on his neck a never silent bell.

Squire Gathers regarded it a most untoward thing that the Belled Buzzard should have come just at this time. The movements of ordinary, unmarked buzzards mainly concerned only those whose stock had strayed; but almost anybody with time to spare might follow this rare and famous visitor, this belled and feathered junkman of the sky. Supposing now that some one followed it today—maybe followed it even to a certain thick clump of cypress in the middle of Little Niggerwool!

But at this particular moment the Belled Buzzard was heading directly away from that quarter. Could it be following him? Of course not! It was just by chance that it flew along the course the squire was taking. But, to make sure, he veered off sharply, away from the footpath into the high weeds so that the startled grasshoppers sprayed up in front of him in fan-like flights.

He was right; it was only a chance. The Belled Buzzard swung off too, but in the opposite direction, with a sharp tonking of its bell, and, flapping hard, was in a minute or two out of hearing and sight, past the trees to the westward.

Again the squire skimped his dinner, and again he spent the long drowsy afternoon upon his front gallery. In all the sky there were now no buzzards visible, belled or unbelled—they had settled to earth somewhere; and this served somewhat to soothe the squire's pestered mind. This does not mean, though, that he was by any means easy in his thoughts. Outwardly he was calm enough, with the ruminative judicial air befitting the oldest justice of the peace in the county; but, within him, a little something gnawed unceasingly at his nerves like one one of those small white worms that are to be found in seemingly sound nuts. About once in so long a tiny spasm of the muscles would contract the dewlap under his chin. The squire had never heard of that play, made famous

by a famous player, wherein the murdered victim was a pedler too, and a clamoring bell the voice of unappeasable remorse in the murderer's ear. As a strict churchgoer the squire had no use for players or for play actors, and so was spared that added canker to his conscience. It was bad enough as it was.

That night, as on the night before, the old man's sleep was broken and fitful and disturbed by dreaming, in which he heard a metal clapper striking against a brazen surface. This was one dream that came true. Just after daybreak he heaved himself out of bed, with a flop of his broad bare feet upon the floor, and stepped to the window and peered out. Half seen in the pinkish light, the Belled Buzzard flapped directly over his roof and flew due south, right toward the swamp—drawing a direct line through the air between the slayer and the victim—or, anyway, so it seemed to the watcher, grown suddenly tremulous.

Knee deep in yellow swamp water the squire squatted, with his shotgun cocked and loaded and ready, waiting to kill the bird that now typified for him guilt and danger and an abiding great fear. Gnats plagued him and about him frogs croaked. Almost overhead a logcock clung lengthwise to a snag, watching him. Snake doctors, limber, long insects with bronze bodies and filmy wings, went back and forth like small living shuttles. Other buzzards passed and repassed, but the squire waited, forgetting the cramps in his elderly limbs and the discomfort of the water in his shoes.

At length he heard the bell. It came nearer and nearer, and the Belled Buzzard swung overhead not sixty feet up, its black bulk a fair target against the blue. He aimed and fired, both barrels bellowing at once and a fog of thick powder smoke enveloping him. Through the smoke he saw the bird careen and its bell jangled furiously; then the buzzard righted itself and was gone, fleeing so fast that the sound of its bell was hushed almost instantly. Two long wing feathers drifted

slowly down; torn disks of gunwadding and shredded green scraps of leaves descended about the squire in a little shower.

He cast his empty gun from him so that it fell in the water and disappeared; and he hurried out of the swamp as fast as his shaky legs would take him, splashing himself with mire and water to his eyebrows. Mucked with mud, breathing in great gulps, trembling, a suspicious figure to any eye, he burst through the weed curtain and staggered into the open, his caution all gone and a vast desperation fairly choking him—but the gray road was empty and the field beyond the road was empty; and, except for him, the whole world seemed empty and silent.

As he crossed the field Squire Gathers composed himself. With plucked handfuls of grass he cleaned himself of much of the swamp mire that coated him over; but the little white worm that gnawed at his nerves had become a cold snake that was coiled about his heart, squeezing it tighter and tighter!

This episode of the attempt to kill the Belled Buzzard occurred in the afternoon of the third day. In the forenoon of the fourth, the weather being still hot, with cloudless skies and no air stirring, there was a rattle of warped wheels in the squire's lane and a hail at his yard fence. Coming out upon his gallery from the innermost darkened room of his house, where he had been stretched upon a bed, the squire shaded his eyes from the glare and saw the constable of his own magisterial district sitting in a buggy at the gate waiting.

The old man went down the dirtpath slowly, almost reluctantly, with his head twisted up sidewise, listening, watching; but the constable sensed nothing strange about the other's gait and posture; the constable was full of the news he brought. He began to unload the burden of it without preamble.

"Mornin', Squire Gathers. There's been a dead man found in Little Niggerwool—and you're wanted."

He did not notice that the squire was holding on with both hands to the gate; but he did notice that the squire had a sick look out of his eyes and a dead, pasty color in his face; and he noticed—but attached no meaning to it—that when the squire spoke his voice seemed flat and hollow.

"Wanted—fur—whut?" The squire forced the words out of his throat, pumped them out fairly.

"Why, to hold the inquest," explained the constable. "The coroner's sick abed, and he said you bein' the nearest jestice of the peace you should serve."

"Oh," said the squire with more ease. "Well, where is it—the body?"

"They taken it to Bristow's place and put it in his stable for the present. They brought it out over on that side and his place was the nearest. If you'll hop in here with me, squire, I'll ride you right over there now. There's enough men already gathered to make up a jury, I reckin."

"I—I ain't well," demurred the squire. "I've been sleepin' porely these last few nights. It's the heat," he added quickly.

"Well, suh, you don't look very brash, and that's a fact," said the constable; "but this here job ain't goin' to keep you long. You see it's in such shape—the body is—that there ain't no way of makin' out who the feller was nor whut killed him. There ain't nobody reported missin' in this county as we know of, either; so I jedge a verdict of a unknown person dead from unknown causes would be about the correct thing. And we kin git it all over mighty quick and put him underground right away, suh—if you'll go along now."

"I'll go," agreed the squire, almost quivering in his newborn eagerness. "I'll go right now." He did not wait to get his coat or to notify his wife of the errand that was taking him. In his shirtsleeves he climbed into the buggy, and the constable turned his horse and clucked him into a trot. And now the squire asked the question that knocked at his lips demanding to be asked—the question the answer to which he yearned for and yet dreaded.

"How did they come to find—it?"

"Well, suh, that's a funny thing," said the constable. "Early this mornin' Bristow's oldest boy—that one they call Buddy—he heard a cowbell over in the swamp and so he went to look; Bristow's got cows, as you know, and one or two of 'em is belled. And he kept on followin' after the sound of it till he got way down into the thickest part of them cypress slashes that's near the middle there; and right there he run acrost it—this body.

"But, suh, squire, it wasn't no cow at all. No, suh; it was a buzzard with a cowbell on his neck—that's whut it was. Yes, suh; that there same old Belled Buzzard he's come back agin and is hangin' round. They tell me he ain't been seen round here sense the year of the yellow fever—I don't remember myself, but that's whut they tell me. The niggers over on the other side are right smartly worked up over it. They say—the niggers do—that when the Belled Buzzard comes it's a sign of bad luck for somebody, shore!"

The constable drove on, talking on, garrulous as a guinea hen. The squire didn't heed him. Hunched back in the buggy, he harkened only to those busy inner voices filling his mind with thundering portents. Even so, his ear was first to catch above the rattle of the buggy wheels the far-away, faint tonk-tonk! They were about half-way to Bristow's place then. He gave no sign, and it was perhaps half a minute before his companion heard it too.

The constable jerked the horse to a standstill and craned his neck over his shoulder.

"Well, by doctors!" he cried, "if there ain't the old scoundrel now, right here behind us! I kin see him plain as day—he's got an old cowbell hitched to his neck; and he's shy a couple of feathers out of one wing. By doctors, that's somethin' you won't see every day! In all my born days I ain't never seen the beat of that!"

Squire Gathers did not look; he only cowered back farther under the buggy top. In the pleasing excitement of the mo-

ment his companion took no heed, though, of anything except the Belled Buzzard.

"Is he followin' us?" asked the squire in a curiously flat, weighted voice.

"Which—him?" answered the constable, still stretching his neck. "No, he's gone now—gone off to the left—jest a zoonin', like he'd done forgot somethin'."

And Bristow's place was to the left! But there might still be time. To get the inquest over and the body underground —those were the main things. Ordinarily humane in his treatment of stock, Squire Gathers urged the constable to greater speed. The horse was lathered and his sides heaved wearily as they pounded across the bridge over the creek which was the outlet to the swamp and emerged from a patch of woods in sight of Bristow's farm buildings.

The house was set on a little hill among cleared fields and was in other respects much like the squire's own house except that it was smaller and not so well painted. There was a wide yard in front with shade trees and a lye hopper and a well-box, and a paling fence with a stile in it instead of a gate. At the rear, behind a clutter of outbuildings—a barn, a smokehouse and a corncrib—was a little peach orchard, and flanking the house on the right there was a good-sized cow-yard, empty of stock at this hour, with feedracks ranged in a row against the fence. A two-year-old negro child, bare-headed and barefooted and wearing but a single garment, was grubbing busily in the dirst under one of these feedracks.

To the front fence a dozen or more riding horses were hitched, flicking their tails at the flies; and on the gallery men in their shirt-sleeves were grouped. An old negro woman, with her head tied in a bandanna and a man's old slouch hat perched upon the bandanna, peeped out from behind a corner. There were gaunt hound dogs wandering about, sniffing uneasily.

Before the constable had the horse hitched the squire was out of the buggy and on his way up the footpath, going at

a brisker step than the squire usually traveled. The men on the porch hailed him gravely and ceremoniously, as befitting an occasion of solemnity. Afterward some of them recalled the look in his eye; but at the moment they noted it —if they noted it at all—subconsciously.

For all his haste the squire, as was also remembered later, was almost the last to enter the door; and before he did enter he halted and searched the flawless sky as though for signs of rain. Then he hurried on after the others, who clumped single file along a narrow little hall, the bare, uncarpeted floor creaking loudly under their heavy farm shoes, and entered a good-sized room that had in it, among other things, a high-piled feather bed and a cottage organ—Bristow's best room, now to be placed at the disposal of the law's representatives for the inquest. The squire took the largest chair and drew it to the very center of the room, in front of a fireplace, where the grate was banked with withering asparagus ferns. The constable took his place formally at one side of the presiding official. The others sat or stood about where they could find room—all but six of them, whom the squire picked for his coroner's jury, and who backed themselves against the wall.

The squire showed haste. He drove the preliminaries forward with a sort of tremulous insistence. Bristow's wife brought a bucket of fresh drinking water and a gourd, and almost before she was out of the room and the door closed behind her the squire had sworn his jurors and was calling the first witness, who it seemed likely would also be the only witness—Bristow's oldest boy. The boy wriggled in confusion as he sat on a cane-bottomed chair facing the old magistrate. All there, barring one or two, had heard his story a dozen times already, but now it was to be repeated under oath; and so they bent their heads, listening as though it were a brand-new tale. All eyes were on him; none were fastened on the squire as he, too, gravely bent his head, listening—listening.

The witness began—but had no more than started when the squire gave a great, screeching howl and sprang from his chair and staggered backward, his eyes popped and the pouch under his chin quivering as though it had a separate life all its own. Startled, the constable made toward him and they struck together heavily and went down—both on their all fours—right in front of the fireplace.

The constable scrambled free and got upon his feet, in a squat of astonishment, with his head craned; but the squire stayed upon the floor face downward, his feet flopping among the rustling asparagus greens—a picture of slavering animal fear. And now his gagging screech resolved itself into articulate speech.

"I done it!" they made out his shrieked words. "I done it! I own up—I killed him! He aimed fur to break up my home and I tolled him off into Niggerwool and killed him! There's a hole in his back if you'll look fur it. I done it—oh, I done it—and I'll tell everything jest like it happened if you'll jest keep that thing away from me! Oh, my Lawdy! Don't you hear it It's a-comin' clos'ter and clos'ter—it's a-comin' after me! Keep it away——" His voice gave out and he buried his head in his hands and rolled upon the gaudy carpet.

And now they all heard what he had heard first—they heard the tonk-tonk-tonk of a cowbell, coming near and nearer toward them along the hallway without. It was as though the sound floated along. There was no creak of footsteps upon the loose, bare boards—and the bell jangled faster than it would dangling from a cow's neck. The sound came right to the door and Squire Gathers wallowed among the chair legs.

The door swung open. In the doorway stood a negro child, barefooted and naked except for a single garment, eyeing them with serious, rolling eyes—and, with all the strength of his two puny arms, proudly but solemnly tolling a small rusty cowbell he had found in the cowyard.

Reading List

Stories of Character: Psychological.

Burnet, Dana. "Rain" (*See* Greene, F., *The Grim Thirteen*).
Child, Richard Washburne. "Fibre."
Cobb, Irvin. "The Gallowsmith."
Dobie, Charles C. "Laughter" (in O'Brien's *Best Short Stories of 1917*); "The Open Window" (in O'Brien's *Best Short Stories of 1918*).
Lewis, Sinclair. "The Willow Walk" (in O'Brien's *Best Short Stories of 1918*).
Maupassant, Guy de. "The Coward," "The Piece of String," "A Vendetta," "Fear," "The Confession," "Le Horla."
Poe, Edgar Allen. "The Tell-Tale Heart," "The Black Cat," "Thou Art the Man," "Berenice."
Steele, Wilbur D. "Land's End," "Ked's Hand," "The Woman at Seven Brothers."
Stevenson, Robert Louis. "Markheim," "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde."
Widdemer, Margaret. "The Changeling."

THE CONVERSION OF ELVINY *

By Helen R. Martin

"Amaziah, you dare read off your composition now," said Eli Darmstetter, addressing the largest pupil of the class that sat before him in his school-room, one warm afternoon in April.

Eli taught the free school of Canaan, a small country district in southeastern Pennsylvania, and though he was a graduate of the "Millersville Normal," he had not lost his native provincial tongue, a unique dialect grown out of the free translation into English of what is known as "Pennsylvania Dutch." Neither had he lost, in the dignity of being the district teacher, the familiar designation of "Eli," not only because he had all his life lived in this neighborhood, but also because most of his pupils' parents professed the ascetic New Mennonite faith, and the custom of that sect in addressing all men by their Christian names (based on the Scriptural injunction, "Call no man master") had become the conventionally polite form of the district.

Amaziah cleared his throat, stole a hasty side glance at Elviny on his right, and coloring deeply rose to "read off" his composition.

Amaziah was a stalwart young man of twenty; his sunbrowned face and hands bore evidence that he was a son of the soil, and his countenance, though somewhat heavy, was

* From *The Betrothal of Elypholate;* copyright, 1907, by The Century Co. Reprinted by permission of the author and the publishers.

so open and honest, his eyes and mouth so kindly, that the heart of the comely Elviny warmed to him.

This youth of twenty and damsel of seventeen were by no means exceptionally old pupils in the Canaan district school, the short winter term of six months giving so little opportunity for an education that many of the sons and daughters of the district farmers availed themselves thereof till even a later age.

Amaziah in a loud though embarrassed voice announced his subject and read his production.

THE USE OF THE STUDY OF GEOGRAPHY

"The study of Geography which so many people delight in studying. Is studied in all most all parts of the Earth and has been studied since the beginning of the World already. Without Geography we could not get along just so very well still, for if we wanted to go to Philadelphia. We might go to Harrisburg in a mistake not knowing what direction Philadelphia was from us. When Columbus sailed from Spain in search of the new World He might of went in the opposite direction if He had not of studied Geography before he undertook the expedition. Geography is off great importance to travelers that have to travel all over the World for if they did not know where the places they wanted to travel was They might of never found the places they wanted to travel."

Amaziah had often said that he would rather plow for a week than write one composition. The above had been an especially strenuous effort, made in the hope that Elviny "wouldn't think he was so wonderful dumb, for all he couldn't speak off pieces of poetry as good as her."

He looked vastly relieved as he sat down; and he listened and watched with closest attention as Elviny in her turn gracefully rose, and, placing the tips of her fingers on her lips, coughed genteelly before commencing to read:

SINGLE LIFE

"Single life is the happiest life that ever was spent when you are single you can go when you please and come when you please and stay as long as you please. When you are single you have nothing on your mind still to bother you. Single life is the sweetest life that ever was spent. When you are single you can do as you please you have nothing to bother your mind at all."

Without so much as glancing toward Amaziah to note the full effect of these radical sentiments, Elviny complacently resumed her seat. As for him, he found himself so painfully surprised at learning that such were the views of the girl with whom he "kep' steady comp'ny," that he had no attention to give to the remaining compositions of the class.

On their way home from school, in the April afternoon sunshine, he expostulated with her.

"Elviny," he said reproachfully, as side by side they walked on the high, wide pike, "the way you spoke in that there composition, it was something shameful! I didn't think to hear you read off such thoughts as them."

"Och, don't be so dumb, Amaziah," Elviny said, poking him impatiently with her elbow. "A body don't have to mean everything that a person writes off in a composition. I had to write off somepin' then, and it was so warm I couldn't think what for thoughts *to* write. There for a while I had a mind to put down how solemn it was to get married. But then it come to me," she said seriously, "how it would be a good deal more solemn not to get married. So I just wrote off them thoughts about single life, to get through once."

Amaziah's face lighted up with relief. "I'd have thought you meant it, and I was now bothered something wonderful already."

There had been a tacit engagement of marriage between these two ever since four years before, when Elviny was thir-

teen and Amaziah sixteen. It had happened one summer evening while they had been swinging together in a hammock by the front gate of Elviny's home. She had suddenly and unexpectedly said to Amaziah:

"Say, will you be mad if I tell you somepin', Amaziah?"

"N-aw!" in a tone of affectionate scorn at the suggestion. "Let it out!"

"Say—I love you!"

"Aw—I knowed that already. Say! Will you be mad if I tell you somepin', Elviny?"

"No; go on; tell me oncet."

"I love you."

The understanding thus established had grown clearer every day and hour of the past four years.

"If them books is heavy for you, you'd better leave me carry 'em then," Amaziah rather bashfully proposed, as Elviny, to relieve her right arm, transferred her pile of schoolbooks to the left. Amaziah always felt embarrassed when he tried to be gallant.

"Well," she conceded, letting him take them, "if you want. It ain't particular to me."

"What for book is this here that you're got covered? Oh, 'rithmetic. Do you know, Elviny," confidentially, "that's the only book I'm handy at? All the other books I'm dumb in."

"I'm different to what you are," she said; "I always thought 'rithmetic was an awful hard book. When it ain't so warm I'd sooner write off compositions than anything else in school; I'm most always got so many thoughts that way it comes easy to me still. But say, Amaziah, ain't you glad school's goin' to be done next week? And me and you'll never go to school no more. Och, but I'm glad!"

"Then we'll keep comp'ny reg'lar, ain't?" Amaziah affectionately demanded, coloring and looking self-conscious. "Soon's we're done school? You'll leave me set up with you Saturday nights still, ain't you will, Elviny?"

This privilege had not yet been granted to Amaziah, as, in the etiquette of Canaan, it would have been irregular for him to have "set up Saturday nights" with Elviny until both of them had finished their schooling.

"Who else would be settin' up with me but you?" Elviny answered, with an embarrassed little laugh. "Don't be so dumb."

Amaziah laughed too and blushed again, and glancing behind him on the pike, to make sure he was unobserved, he pressed his sweetheart's hand as it hung at her side. She returned the pressure, then of a sudden drew away from him bashfully, and for a moment they walked on in a rather strained silence.

"It's warm, ain't?" he presently hazarded.

Elviny started at a something unusual in his tone; something which betrayed the fact that for some reason he was not at his ease with her. She knew in a flash what had come into his mind, and, instinctively, she tried to fight off the dangerous subject which she felt he was taking courage to broach.

"Whether it's warm?" she repeated inquiringly. "Yes, I believe it's warmer than what it was right away this morning."

"It looks some for rain," he remarked.

"You think?" she said, a slight surprise in her voice as she examined the sky. "Does the noospaper call for rain?"

"I didn't see the noospaper this morning then, but the sky looks for showers, I'm afraid. I wisht it didn't, for I got to help pop through—he's plantin' in the garden this evening, and if it rains we'll have to come in and leave it rain—and then we won't get done already."

"I wisht, too, it don't rain, so you'll get done once."

"Yes, anyhow," nodded Amaziah.

"Ain't this a hilly road?" Elviny quickly asked, to stave off the disagreeable theme she knew was impending. "It makes me some tired to walk from William Penn home."

"William Penn" was the name of the school-house.

"Yes," answered Amaziah, "there's hills a-plenty all along this here road. Why there's hills on the pike already when you're only at Noo Danville. Say, Elviny?"

He turned upon her with decision, and she winced as from a lash.

"There's just only but one thing, Elviny, that I wisht——"

"Now Amaziah, I know what you're at—you needn't say nothin' about that!" Elviny tried to check him. "I don't want to hear to it!"

Amaziah set his jaw obstinately. "It's time me and you had this here thing out and done with it," he affirmed. "I like you better'n any girl in Canaan District, but I ain't goin' to waste my time settin' up Saturday evenings with a girl that's likely any day to give herself up and put on them darned Noo Mennonite little white caps and gray dresses with them foolish-lookin' capes! I know them Noo Mennonites!" he defiantly exclaimed, his resolution to speak his mind at its highest. Elviny turned pale at his tone and look of determination. "Your folks is Noo Mennonites from way back to your great grandfather already, and when it's in a body's blood that there way, they're bound to give themselves up sooner or later—unless they promise they won't never! I'm afraid of it for you, Elviny."

"A body to hear you talk, Amaziah, would think it was the smallpox, anyhow, 'stid of religion!" Elviny almost sobbed.

"Yes, and I'd anyhow as soon it was the smallpox! Elviny, I'd as soon see you dead as see your pretty face in one of them darned——"

"Amaziah! I ain't goin' to listen to no sich talk! You speak something shameful!"

"Well, I like you 'cause you're pretty, and if you went and made yourself ugly by wearin' them caps and capes and dull colors, and if you went and turned plain and wouldn't never no more go to town with me to see a circus or a county fair or have our photographs took or whatever, where'd be any com-

fort for a feller in bein' married? Elviny, I tell you now, straightforward, I don't want to be married to no Noo Mennonite. And if I ain't to marry you, I don't want to waste my time settin' up with you Saturdays."

"Then you needn't! I guess I can find a plenty others that wants to set up with me."

Amaziah's determined jaw slightly relaxed. But he held out. "And I guess I can mebbe find others that wants me to set up with 'em, Elviny, so far forth as that goes," he retaliated.

"You'll be keepin' comp'ny, I guess, with Sally Haverstick then!" crossly said Elviny.

"It's very probably," he relentlessly acknowledged, "unless you pass me your promise you won't never, as long as you live, put on one of them little white caps with ties."

"But, Amaziah, how can a body tell whether or no she'll ever come under conviction and be led to give herself up?" Elviny reasoned with him. "I might never, mebbe. Then again, I might any day. You might mebbe some time come under conviction yourself. A body can't tell of them things. I can't choose you instead of Christ, can I? I think you are, now, onreasonable."

"You pass me your promise you won't never put on their little white caps with strings—that's all I got to say. Anything you want me to promise back again, I'll say yes to. If you'll pass me that promise, Elviny, I'll marry you and be the best husband to you that anybody kin."

Elviny knew full well the force of these words, for Amaziah always meant just what he said, and always stuck to it. Moreover, he would be fully able to carry out his promise to be a good husband to her, for he was the only son of a father who owned three large rich farms, and was, therefore, in the language of the neighborhood, very "well fixed."

"If it weren't in all your folks to turn plain, Elviny," Amaziah firmly continued, "I'd never have no fears of such a giddy-headed girl like what you are turnin' plain, for it's

your nature to be wonderful fashionable, and you're so much for pleasure-seekin' that way. But," he continued, with stern emphasis, "I never knowed a son or daughter of a Noo Mennonite that didn't some time or 'nother in their life give theirselves up then. And I ain't runnin' no such risks. You pass me your promise you'll never wear a white cap with ties, or I'll go and keep comp'ny with Sally Haverstick or whoever."

"I tell you, Amaziah," Elviny said brokenly, "How can a body make such a promise like what that is? If I ever came under conviction——"

"Then join the Methodists or the Baptists. I pass it as my opinion that there's good in all religions. You can have religion without turnin' plain. The Methodists stays fashionable after they are convicted of their sins."

"But if I was to ever come under conviction, Amaziah, I couldn't never hold to the things of the World no more. It wouldn't be accordin' to Scriptures, deed 'n' it wouldn't," she pleaded, with quivering lips. "Oh, Amaziah!"

They had turned from the pike into the lane leading to Elviny's home, and the girl suddenly stopped short, leaned against the fence, bent her arm over her eyes like a child, and sobbed. Amaziah's kindly face twitched with sympathy for her trouble as he awkwardly stood before her.

"I guess you think I'm usin' you mean, Elviny," he said tenderly, but with no relaxation of his firmness. "But it's for the happiness of both of us in the coming future before us, Elviny. I couldn't be contented married to no Noo Mennonite. I couldn't like you if you didn't dress and act fashionable like me."

"But mebbe I'll never be called to turn plain," Elviny pleaded. "Mebbe," she said hopefully, "the Spirit won't never lead me to see the light."

"But then again mebbe it will. I ain't takin' no sich risks. You pass me your—here comes your mom."

The sudden appearance at the fence of a stout woman

holding a dish-pan full of lettuce was the occasion of Amaziah's sudden digression. The woman was dressed in the "plain" garb of the New Mennonites—a straight, gathered skirt, an untrimmed waist extending below the belt (to distinguish them from the Old Mennonites, whose basques end at the belt), a three-cornered cape of the same material as the gown, and a little white cap with flying ties. At a first glance, Mrs. Dinkleberger's face appeared to be commonplace enough, stolid, heavy, uninteresting; but a closer examination revealed in her otherwise dull eyes a look that only a deep experience of life can give to any countenance; that look which shows that through some channel the soul has sounded its own nether foundations and has laid hold upon a Reality which only those who lose themselves in the larger life of the Divine can ever find.

"Well," she said in a mild voice, "are yous home a'ready? It's only a quarter till four?"

"We come right away out then," said Elviny, speaking cheerfully to hide the signs of her weeping. "Ain't we did, Amaziah? Are you pickin' the lettuce for market, mom?"

"Yes, I thought I'd do it for pop; then it would be done."

"Why didn't you wait till I come to help you through oncet? She does too much still," she added explanatorily to Amaziah. "Ever since she had the pee-noo-mony, it makes her so tired 'till she gets the work through."

"Yes, I'll be glad when Elviny's done school oncet, so's she can help me still. We got such big washin's—'till each has their pile, the wash is big already."

"That's what mom says still," said Amaziah sociably. "And she ain't no daughter to help her—only a dopplig (awkward) hired girl."

"Is your hired girl now a doppel, Amaziah?" Mrs. Dinkleberger asked with interest.

"Wonderful," Amaziah ruefully answered. "Why, here one day last week she put buttermilk in pop's tea, and fast as mom gets things redd up still, she gets 'em all through-

other. Mom wishes she'd leave once. But she won't send her off 'cause it gives you such a name with the neighbors, you know, that way, for not bein' able to keep your hired girl. So mom leaves her stay right on, for all it gives her so much extry work to have her, and makes her tied down so close."

"Don't she never get away still?" Mrs. Dinkleberger asked sympathetically.

"Oh, now and again she gets to go some. But she never was one of them to go much that way. But you come to see her once, ain't? Don't look on turns."

"I don't know but what I will, for all I don't go much neither, since I turned plain—it's now four years back. And I have to wait for pop still to drive the horse, 'cause our horse he can't be drove by no women, he still makes so ugly for me at the railroad crossin'. Why one muddy day he made so awful for me when he seen the cars that the buggy was all over dirt."

"Now, think!" said Amaziah in surprise. "Well," he added, "mebbe some day when I'm drivin' over here, mom'll come along with me over."

"Yes, anyhow," answered Mrs. Dinkleberger, hospitably.

"But I don't know just when it'll suit for the horse," Amaziah said, glancing at Elviny with a meaning look, as who should say, "It'll suit for the horse to haul me over here when you pass me that promise."

Elviny cast down her eyes and looked unhappy. Amaziah's face manifested no less misery, but he remained firm.

"Well," said Mrs. Dinkleberger, "I got to go in now and make supper. Won't you come in, Amaziah, and set a while?"

"Saddy (thank you), but I can't just so very convenient to-day. Good-by."

"Good-by, Amaziah, then."

She turned to go, but Elviny checked her. "Wait for me, mom, and I'll carry the lettuce in for you."

Hurrying through the gate, she held out her hands for the dish-pan. She did not want to be left alone with Amaziah.

She knew him of old,—he would stick to his point,—and she was afraid to trust herself with him lest she should yield.

"You'll have enough to do carryin' them school-books Amaziah's holdin' for you," said her mother. "Take 'em from him and come along then in. You can make the fried potatoes for me for supper."

Without looking at her lover, Elviny took the books from his hands over the fence.

"Promise, Elviny," he whispered, as he gave them to her. "Go on, dear! That you won't never wear one of them——"

Elviny shook her head, the tears rising again to her eyes.

"You think it out and write me off a note then," was his parting admonition. And Elviny left him and hastened after her mother.

Elviny had known from the first that when Amaziah took that tone of firmness with her, she would, in the end, do what he demanded of her. So she was not surprised at herself when that night, sorely against her conscience, she despatched a note to him, giving the promise that he had required, namely, that she would "never wear one of them little white caps with ties," this particular feature of the Mennonite garb evidently standing to him for a symbol of all the asceticism and narrowness of the New Mennonites' life.

But Amaziah's joy in his conquest was short-lived. When two evenings later, being Sunday, he betook himself, clad in the "fashionable" apparel his soul loved, to the home of his sweetheart, he found her so pale, so silent, so woebegone, that he was stricken with remorse and sorrow for her. They did not discuss, or even mention, the painful subject of the promise; but Amaziah felt convinced, after a two hours' fruitless endeavor to make her "act sociable and pleasant," that poor Elviny would never be "contented" again with such a load of sin on her conscience as that promise seemed to be.

"It's most nearly as worse as if she'd turned plain," he

thought, in great trouble of mind, as he wended his way homeward in the moonlight. "What's a body to do?"

He realized, as time went on, how great a proof of her love she had given him, and this increased tenfold his already strong devotion to her. But as week after week he saw her, under the effect of her burden of guilt, grow thinner and paler and sadder, his own conscience began to trouble him.

"She thinks she's choosed me before Christ," he mused. "And it's near makin' her sick! Poor thing, she won't never be contented no more, I'm afraid, 'till she's took back her word to me."

Tugging at his own heartstrings was the longing to release her from her promise—just for the joy of seeing her look happy once more. But he could not bring himself to that point of self-sacrifice. Her relief would be so great that she might be led, in her thankfulness to the Lord, to give herself up at once. And then where would he be? No; he must hold out in his determination to make her forswear the faith of her fathers. In time, perhaps, she would get used to it and cease to fret. He would wait.

"But I wisht I could see her lookin' contented once again," he said to himself one Saturday evening, as, with little pleasure in his visit, he walked up the lane to her home. "Blamed if I wouldn't most be willin' to do anything to see her lookin' contented again."

He was destined to have this generous wish of his put to the test sooner than he had counted on. When, ten minutes later, Elviny walked into her parlor to receive him, he knew, in a flash such as seldom came to his monotonous, slow-moving mental life, that never had he seen her more beautiful than she appeared to his eyes this night. She was robed as she had never been before. A light gray skirt hung straight from her waist, and a plain, untrimmed, close-fitting basque brought out the beauty of her form and was not concealed by the little three-cornered cape that lay over the basque.

The letter of her promise to Amaziah had been that she

would "never wear one of them white caps with ties"—but, oh, the subtlety of the daughters of Eve and the fatuity of the sons of Adam!—an Indian mull cap, not white, but of the faintest shade of gray and having no ties, covered her head.

However, her "plain" clothes were not the greatest change he found in her. What was this new light in her eyes that looked up at him with such deep happiness shining in their clear beauty? A feeling of awe fell upon Amaziah. Had Elviny indeed got religion?

"You see, Amaziah," he heard her soft voice speak as though coming from a distance, for there was a loud singing in his head that kept him from hearing her clearly, "I'm keepin' my promise. I ain't wearin' one of them little white caps with ties. This here's a tinted gray cap and ain't got no ties. The Scriptures haven't got nothing' about the color nor the ties, only that a woman's head shall be covered because her hair's a pride to her and pleasing to the eye."

"Are you turned plain, Elviny?" Amaziah managed to ask in a half whisper.

"I've give myself up, Amaziah," she replied with pale-faced, clear-eyed resolution. "I ain't broke my promise to you, and never will. I'll always wear these here tinted caps without ties to 'em. Now you have the dare to take me, or leave me be."

"Are you contented again, Elviny?"

"I never knowed before what happiness it was to be had in this here life. It's all in servin' the Lord, Amaziah. I had such a troubled conscience—it was now a wonderful troubled conscience I had this here while back already. And my fashionable clothes they condemned me something turrible. But it's all over now, Amaziah. I've give myself up and I'm dressin' plain, and I'll never walk no more in the paths of this World."

Thus had Elviny followed out the invincible law of her being; for the offspring of New Mennonite stock inherit, from

an ancestry whose loyalty to conviction made them victims of the persecutions of the Thirty Years' War, a persistency in "reverting to the original type" that is in their very life blood, and needs only some stress of circumstances to bring it out in force.

"Turn your back around behind you and leave me see how the plain dress becomes you," was Amaziah's stolid comment upon Elviny's sublime renunciation.

Elviny slowly revolved herself for inspection. When her back was toward him, Amaziah measured her shapely form with his masculine eye, then suddenly put his arms about her and held her close to his breast.

"It becomes you something surprising, Elviny!" he whispered ecstatically. "You never looked as pretty before. And I never liked you as good as what I do to-night!"

She turned in his arms and laid her head on his shoulder, with a long, happy sigh of relief. He pressed his lips to her soft neck and downy cheek.

"But we'll have to be married soon, Amaziah—before I join meeting, you know. For after I'm once joined, I can't marry in the World, no more. And you're in the World, you know. So we'll have to be married soon."

"All right, Elviny," Amaziah heartily responded. "I'll make it suit just as soon as I otherwise can! We'll be married till the back end of August already!"

VLAD'S SON *

By Konrad Bercovici

It was my father's boast that he had half of Europe at his feet. A flat-bottomed rowboat or a spacious log raft was always moored to an iron ring embedded in the rock on which we built our home on the shore of the Danube. And every good Rumanian holds that the Danube is half of Europe.

Back of the house rolled an undulating stretch of pasture-ground, in which roamed the cattle of the village. It was the common pasture-ground of the community. The cows came there from miles away early every morning and returned home by themselves in time for the evening's milking. Watch-dogs, sure-footed and heavy-coated, did their hereditary duty without any one's paying any special attention to them. Food they had in plenty; the slaughter-house was not far from the pasture.

Twice every year the same stretch did duty as fair-grounds. Early every spring, even before the snow had melted, tents and shanties were put up and for fully ten days before Easter the peasants of our village and the surrounding villages, with their women and children, were in the *khan*—the inn—from early morning to late at night.

At the close of the fair there was not a red copper left in the district. Most of the money had gone to foreign lands. From the Tartars the Rumanian peasants bought young long-horned oxen; from the Russians, furs; long-haired, heavy-

* From *Ghitza, and Other Romances of Gypsy Blood;* copyright, 1921, by Boni and Liveright. Reprinted by permission of the author and the publishers.

mustached Hungarians from Budapest and short-sighted Germans from Leipzig sold them plows and cultivators, and, coming from far America, a Yankee salesman sold brightly colored harvesting-machines, binders and mowers, which attracted considerable attention, not only for themselves but because they were brought from America—from far away, from so far away. . . . This alone gave them a romantic glamour in the eyes of the Rumanians.

The spring fair was the buying-fair, but in the fall, after the cattle were stabled, the wheat threshed and the corn put away in the cribs, the fair-grounds were given over to the selling of the products of the land—wheat, rye, corn, honey, sheep, pigs, cows and horses. The peasants brought all they had to the *yarmarock.* The money thus obtained for their products in those ten days was all the income for the year. And those ten days and the ten days after and more, if the summer had been a good one and prices decent, were days of great gayety, with the never-ending music of the *tziganes* and the never-ending flow of newly pressed wine oozing from the wooden wine-press directly into the earthen pitcher, and never-ending dancing, singing and shouting.

Not a day passed without a wedding. It was the month of *Sfintu Dumitru,* the month during which nearly all the weddings of the rural districts of Rumania take place.

The yearly fall fair of Cerna Voda was one of the best known in Rumania. The gypsies swarmed in from all sides. Horse-trading tribes came in their high-wheeled wagons drawn by small Moldavian ponies; coppersmith tribes came on foot, the men carrying the kettles and tongs on their backs and the women in gayly colored dresses embroidered in gold and silver holding the small children on their shoulders and balancing the family belongings, the blankets and the quilts on their heads; while the older children, half-naked and barefooted, marched in droves back of the tribe. Gypsy musicians played the violin and the flute on the road as they marched, quarreling, fighting and holding musical contests

under the blue sky on the edge of a forest, with their bare feet dangling in the water of some lake or brook.

And one must not forget the blond Slovaks and Croats, as they came in their furred pants and long sheepskin coats, with heavy rolls of steel and copper wire dangling on their shoulders, working as they walked, twisting the wires into all sorts of useful things—rat-traps, sieves, rings, dog-collars and clothes-pins, calling out their wares to the empty space by sheer force of habit; docile and patient beasts of burden, known never to grumble, never to rest; in one year traversing Rumania from one end of the Carpathian Mountains to the other and in the following year all the length of the Danube to where the river falls into the Black Sea; lying down to sleep where the night overtook them, in the dust of the road in summer and in hastily built snow-huts in the winter.

To the people of Cerna Voda, in fact to the whole population of the Dobrudja, Vlad's gypsy tribe was one of the best known. All his people, men, women and children, were never referred to by their names. The peasant merely designated them as a Vlad man or a Vlad woman.

Vlad, the chief, was the ruler; his word was law for the fourscore and more people composing his tribe. And before his wrath they all trembled and the strongest of them was cowed by just one glance from Vlad's lone, big dark eye.

The gypsy chief was a tall, straight, well-built man of fifty with long red hair and beard, with a thin black mustache hardly covering a high overlip under a well-lined nose. As lithe and noiseless as a panther in his gait, quiet-spoken, calm, he gave the impression of the born ruler of men, the man who dictated life and death.

He never bartered. But before any deal was closed by any of his men he was consulted, and his word was the last. His knowledge of horses was uncanny, and the peasants were convinced that he could speak to a horse in its language and order it to do just what he wanted.

It was known also that Vlad was the best horse-thief, and

because he had never been caught he was held in great respect. No matter how well a horse was guarded, if Vlad had taken a fancy to it the animal disappeared from the stable. And once gone, it was gone forever. And because Vlad stole only the best, it was a compliment to the owner when the lone-eyed, red-headed gypsy chief stole the animal.

That year had been a great one for farmers on the shore of the Danube. There had been plenty of seasonal rain, and when the wheat was ready to be harvested, the sun baked the ground dry. The sheaves had never been heavier; the corn, too, had yielded more than in any other year.

Because of droughts in other places, grain prices were so high that after the fall fair was over each peasant had more money in his pockets than he had ever had before. There were not enough musicians to play at all the weddings that took place, and each wedding feast lasted at least three days. The *tziganes,* the musicians, *lautars,* worked themselves to death, snatching bits of sleep on their feet as they played the interminable waltzes and *doinas* for the joyous youths.

In the thick of this joy, on a Friday, Vlad's tribe arrived from the Black Sea. Much to the chagrin of his son, Radu, who was in love with Anica, the daughter of the innkeeper of Cerna Voda, the chief had miscalculated the time and the tribe was too late for the fair. But because men and beasts were tired Vlad decided to pitch camp on the fair-grounds and rest. They had with them some very fine horses and some black sheep they had brought from Astrakhan to sell for breeding.

The peasant youth had arranged a horse-race for the following Sunday. Among the riders was Tudor, the mayor's son, on a little chestnut filly of his. She was the pride of the village. Mara, the filly, won the race before she started from the post. If the others partook in the race at all, it was to see how far behind the filly they could run.

The eyes of every one were on the little animal, which

stowed away space and air and seemed, with her outstretched neck and fuming nostrils, to be thirsty for more and more space to conquer.

After the race was over the whole village surrounded Tudor and his horse. The men shook hands with the young man, the women covered him with flowers and the young girls braided colored ribbons taken from their own hair into the mane of the little filly. Vlad, the gypsy, stood at a distance, outside the circle of Tudor's friends.

From the instant his eye had taken in the sweep of the little mare's shape he had thought of nothing else. He had never owned a horse he liked so well. Not even that black stallion, Stica, for whom the whole tribe mourned when he died.

Vlad had thought Stica to be his last love, that his heart would never more go out to a horse, and suddenly that little filly caught his eye and awoke his inherent slumbering passion—a passion which only those of gypsy blood can understand.

Unable to hold out any longer, the gypsy chief approached the beaming Tudor and throwing his arm round the horse's neck he brought out the right hand from his pocket full of gold, and said:

"Take it all, and give me the horse, Tudor, son of Miron."

Tudor trembled as he pushed away the handful of gold.

"This horse is not for sale, man. Take your gold away and don't tempt me."

The offer of a handful of gold was a great compliment, coming as it did from Vlad, the best horseman in Rumania, but the boy loved the horse and he knew that the innkeeper's daughter, Anica, would never forgive him if he ever parted with Mara. He knew how passionately she loved the horse, and he also knew that if she had consented to marry him instead of Radu, Vlad's son, it was only because he was the owner of Mara.

"This horse is not for sale, Vlad," he repeated again and again, as he pushed the proffered gold away.

The gypsy, still with his left arm round Mara's neck, called to one of his men and spoke a few words to him in his own language. The man dashed away to the chief's tent. The peasants watched the transaction. Vlad fixed his lone eye on Tudor, and the boy fidgeted with the fringes of his red sash and repeated:

"It's not for sale, Vlad. It's not for sale. You don't understand, Vlad. I can't sell this horse."

The gypsy messenger returned with two leather pouches, holding one in each hand. Vlad called Tudor nearer to him.

"Open your hands, boy," he called out, and as Tudor did so he poured gold-pieces from the pouch into the cupped palms.

"Is that enough?" he asked, when one of the pouches was empty.

Tudor raised his eyebrows and looked at the peasants who stood with mouths agape at the sight of so much gold. No one said a word. Tudor was vacillating, when he suddenly saw Anica coming on a run from the inn.

Flushed, perspiring, the clean-limbed, dark-eyed daughter of a gypsy woman and a Rumanian father rushed up to the boy and with her breath still hot she asked:

"You did not, did you?"

His hands were full of gold and Vlad's hands were round the filly's neck.

"No, I did not, Anica," he answered.

"Then why does Vlad hold the horse? Let go of Mara, Vlad," she said, trying to pry his arm loose. "And you, Tudor, give him back his gold, or all is broken between us."

"Oh, I see," Vlad remarked. "This is Anica, the innkeeper's daughter, is it not? Where is Radu? Is he not with you? He was so anxious to come to Cerna Voda—because of you. Or is this not Anica, the innkeeper's daughter?"

"So she is," the peasants echoed.

"Well, well, look how fast she has grown!" Vlad continued in an oily voice. "And Tudor is—bless me, bless me—and I

thought she was in love with my son, Radu—bless me, bless me—— The ways of women, the ways of women!"

"I will have none of your Radu; I will have none of your people—puppets without a will of their own, who forever depend on what Vlad will say or do," Anica shouted at him. "And do please let go of that horse and go God's way. Let go, I say," she screamed, as she tried to lead the horse away. "Let go, let go."

Vlad looked at her.

"Hold out your hands, Anica," he ordered, and as she obeyed, without thinking, the gypsy chief emptied all the gold of the second pouch into her cupped hands.

"And I shall pay all the wedding expenses besides," he announced, winking to the peasants, "and I will have to buy a beautiful girl for my son, Radu—one more beautiful than you, Anica, if possible."

People looked at one another, not daring to say a word lest the spell be broken. Tudor looked pleadingly at his flushed gypsy girl. So much gold all at once for a horse! It was a fortune. She met his gaze with contempt.

"No, Vlad, that horse is not for sale. As for the wedding expenses, I give thanks to the Lord that I am not an orphan. Take your gold," and before Vlad had time to utter another word, she emptied her hands, made Tudor empty his into the gypsy's coat pocket, and with one jump she was on the horse and up and away from the fair-grounds.

Vlad, pale and shaking as with the ague, looked to the perplexed Tudor, shrugged his shoulders and gave a short laugh. Then he left the crowd to enter his tent. The peasants surrounded the excited boy.

"You'd better get the money, Tudor, and let him have the horse."

"When Vlad wants a horse, he gets it," said the village priest. "We know that, don't we, people?"

"Yes, he has a way with horses. He casts a spell over them

and they evaporate from the stable like thin air. You may guard the stable day and night, and the horse disappears. He bewitches them," explained another man.

"He does, he does," many assented.

"Have you not seen how he looked at the little filly? Who knows but what the two spoke together when he had his arm around her? Who knows? Who knows?"

"Nonsense," said young Tudor. "It's my horse and I won't sell it. Have I not as much right to own the horse as a *tzigane?* What?"

"The truth of the matter is," explained Jonica, the oldest inhabitant of Cerna Voda, "that Anica does not want him to sell the horse. You know, Anica, really—because of her mother's blood—— When they love a horse they sacrifice everything, are ready to do anything—trample upon others and even destroy themselves for a horse, for a particular horse."

"Have you not heard?" remarked another man. "She marries Tudor instead of Radu because Tudor owns the horse, and Vlad, Vlad is ready to break his son's heart for the same horse. Ah, these gypsies!"

Nothing else was talked about at the inn.

All the horse-lore of hundreds of years was reviewed, and it was agreed that the price Vlad had offered was the weight in gold of that little filly. And as the wine mounted to the heads of the peasants, bets were laid as to whether Vlad would get the horse or not.

Anica, barefooted, fleet-limbed, dressed only in a long white shirt of linen belted at the waist, served the drinks at the tables.

"No, the horse is not for sale," she said in answer to all inquiries.

"But, girl, you know very well that if Vlad wants the horse nothing will stand in his way. You know that, don't you?

And is it fair to Radu to leave him for Tudor because of a horse?" asked old Jonica, the village's story-teller. "And Vlad will get the horse anyhow."

"Nonsense. Tudor will hold watch day and night," the innkeeper's daughter interrupted him, "and he can shoot straight. As to Radu, you don't understand, Tata Jonica, you don't understand. He is only a puppet, not a man. He should have been here four weeks ago. Why did he not come in time?

"He did not. He did not come because his father had willed otherwise. He, Radu, has no will of his own. That's it, Tata Jonica."

"Just like her mother, Reposata, may she rest in peace," muttered the old peasant to himself as he watched Anica rush from table to table. "Ah, that gypsy blood, that tempestuous blood!"

"Ah, youth, youth," the older peasants laughed. "Tudor will watch over the horse! As if it mattered. Vlad will call and it will come. He once bewitched a horse, and it came to him when he called—came riding through space on a broomstick."

The village split into two factions. One believed that the gypsy would get the horse, and the other that he would not. They said that Tudor and Anica were a match for any gypsy.

That very evening a dozen youths offered to stand watch at night to relieve Tudor. One climbed on the roof, armed to the teeth; two young boys posted themselves in the stall, and the four sides of the stable were guarded by two men on each side with a sentinel pacing up and down two hundred feet away. For it was known that Vlad's cunning was much above the ordinary. At midnight the guard was changed, and at daylight the whole village was at the *khan* to inquire about the horse. Was Mara still there?

Vlad, too, came in and was followed by his son, Radu. The young gypsy, the image of his father, walked up to Anica, and leaning far over the bar, he spoke to her.

"So that was behind all you said to me yesterday? *Hein,* Anica? So that's what you did, Anica? Because of a horse you threw me over for the mayor's son. What is he more than I am, I ask? Is he stronger than I am? Is he richer? What? As if I could not give you a horse just as beautiful! What?"

"No," answered Anica, "you could not keep a horse if your father ordered it sold, and for so much gold, too. He, he is his own master, not a puppet of his father as you are. You are not even known by your own name. You are known only as 'Vlad's son.' Fancy how they would call me 'Vlad's son's wife.' Phew!" and she spat on the floor and threw back her head as she showed a row of glittering white teeth.

"Vlad is a chief, but he is my father," Radu answered. "I am sure that he would not be against giving you whatever you want if I asked."

"Not at all," retorted Anica. "Only yesterday he offered to pay the expenses of the wedding between Tudor and myself if I would let him have the horse."

Radu bit his underlip and kept quiet.

"And you are all, all of you, sheep, cowards. Tudor is a man. I never knew it until yesterday. Four handfuls of gold for a horse, and when I said 'No,' he did not have to ask his father. No it was."

"Much of a man, the man who does what a woman wants," sneered the young gypsy.

"But he did not have to ask his father. He did it because I wanted. He did it to please me. To please me," and she beat her heart proudly as she looked defiantly at him.

She served drinks to a few people. When she was free again Radu leaned over the counter and spoke once more.

She did not answer. She remembered long walks in the night—kisses, embraces, promises——

He looked into her eyes as he drank the full quart-pitcher of wine in one draft.

"And suppose he would have sold the horse, what then?"

he inquired. "Suppose he loses the horse, Anica? Suppose he loses the horse?"

"There is not enough gold in the whole world to buy that horse from Tudor, and he guards it with his life," she replied to the subtle proposition made by the young gypsy.

Vlad, who sat all alone at a table, heard the words of the girl and snickered. The gypsy girl looked at him and trembled.

"You had better advise Tudor to take the money," whispered a newly arrived customer in the girl's ear.

"Keep quiet, you drunken weakling," she snapped.

Marin, the innkeeper came in from the back door. His eyes were still heavy with sleep. He yawned as he took a long drink of prune-juice to put himself in shape for the day's work and offered the bottle afterward to his customers.

"Good morning, Vlad. Here is his son, too, grown big and strong. Take a sip, take a sip. Here, it's a man's drink."

Anica looked at Radu, as much as to say:

"Do you hear how they call you?" and the boy bent his head in shame.

While they were talking Tudor came in with his father. The mayor, Miron, shook hands with the gypsy chief; they were old friends—had swapped horses many a time, had drunk from the same glass in token of friendship.

"Glad to see you, Vlad."

"Glad to see you, Miron," Vlad answered, as he made room for the mayor at the table.

"Marin, bring a fresh pitcher and give wine to the men."

Vlad and the mayor drank quietly and spoke about the harvest, the fair and the prices of wheat and corn. The mayor had an inquisitive mind and wanted to know news and gossip of other places; wanted to know about the Tartar chief who had been killed by one of his women in Cocosh, fifty miles from Cerna, and about the new bridge that was thrown over the Danube.

Vlad knew all about everything, because he traveled. Miron

read about the happenings in the only newspaper, which came once a week to the village and which he used to explain to the assembled peasants in front of the little church on Sundays after services.

Excepting the priest, he was the only man who could read —with great difficulty, it is true, and half the words used by the writers were a mystery to him, but he could get the drift of what he read and translate it into the flowery language of the Rumanian peasants—the old Latin dialect, ornamented with Greek, Turkish and Russian.

Radu and Tudor stood leaning against the counter. Both were being served by the innkeeper's dark-eyed, dark-haired daughter. Each talked to her without looking at the other. Without any exchange of words a drinking-contest was started between the two. Such contests ended only when one of the contestants fell to the floor, dead to the world around him.

"A pitcher of last year's wine," ordered Tudor.

"And of the same for me," ordered Radu, and both young men gulped down the blood-red juice in one draft.

It was a contest not only of quantity but one of speed also. The peasants looked on and got ready to take up wagers.

"Another one," demanded Tudor.

"Here, too," motioned Radu.

"Here, Anica," motioned the mayor's son, as he gave the empty pitcher again to the girl.

"Here, too, and bring me a two-quart pitcher this time," the gypsy boy ordered.

Anica hesitated. In a drinking-contest the same measure was served to the contestants. It was an old rule. And Radu was strong. He could drink, she knew that.

"Just bring him a pitcher the same as mine," Tudor spoke excitedly as he straightened up.

"I asked for a double pitcher," insisted Radu, as his fingers coiled around the hilt of his knife, which protruded over the broad red belt.

He looked only at the girl, facing her across the counter.

"Give what I ordered."

The mayor and the gypsy chief had watched the contest between their sons from their seats on a bench behind a table on the farther end of the wall. They were watching the contest with extraordinary intensity, which they screened with talk about crops and travel.

But the moment Radu had grasped the hilt of his knife and the peasants had drawn in a circle to make room for the fight, Vlad jumped up and yelled to his son:

"Return to your tent!"

Radu's fingers uncoiled from the knife, his arm dropped limply by his side and he prepared to leave. He looked into the lone eye of his father as he retreated from the counter. He looked again at his father and at the girl, and as the door framed his erect body, he called out:

"Father, you have gone too far."

Then he laughed and stepped out into the road.

"That's what I call a father's rule," spoke an old peasant.

"Radu is just a plain coward," said Anica, as she went on with her work. "No man could order me around that way. And he is a man! Calls himself a man, ha!"

A week passed and then another week, and the horse was still in Tudor's stable. The youth of the village watched over it day and night. After the second week Vlad could no longer enter the inn without being jeered at. That it should take him so long to make good the silent threat was a sign of decay. He was getting old, too old.

Everybody looked at him with contempt. The people who had bet that he would get the horse wondered that he, Vlad, should have lost his cunning, and the young men who watched the horse openly laughed at him.

"Vlad's other eye was the better one," they said to one another, loud enough for the gypsy chief to hear.

He had lost his other eye in a fight with a Tartar whom he had killed.

His own people, too, began to lose faith in him and no longer feared their ruler. Several deals were closed by his son, Radu, without his permission. It was an unprecedented infringement of his law. But his son grew more and more daring.

Vlad had met Radu late at night hovering around the stable where the filly was kept, and although he had ordered him away he had met him there again and again and had to make believe that he did not see him at all.

The gypsies asked one another why they were still staying in Cerna Voda. Through Vlad's miscalculation they had missed the fair, and now they were missing the great fair at Constanza on the Black Sea. All because he had become infatuated with a horse.

Of course, they knew what such passion meant. Each one of them had at some time or other been attracted to some beautiful animal, and each one's heart had been broken. Some of the horses had died, others became crippled and were shot in mercy, and still others were sold at the orders of Vlad when some big price was offered. For Stica, the stallion he had loved so much, Vlad had given away every pet horse and almost all the gold of the tribe; even to the *salbas,* necklaces, the women had worn.

They could never forget or forgive that. He was a passionate man, Vlad was. His passions were his strength. And he broke every other man's passion for women or horses as soon as it was manifested, lest one of them grow strong with the rising greed and dare oppose his rule when occasion offered.

Only the ruler had a right to strong passions. Such was his dictum. And now a slip of a girl was opposing him! He knew, and his people knew, that Tudor did not count. And if the will of a girl were stronger than his passion, than his cunning, he was no longer fit to rule.

All this was now muttered of and spoken about under their breaths. It was time he was called to account. He was a great chief and all that, but every once in a while all they had saved in years was given away in a day to satisfy one of his whims.

And he broke every one's heart. Nothing was sacred before the fire of his passion. The gypsies grumbled, but no one dared say a word before the face of the chief.

Vlad grew thinner every day. He had loved women and had grieved when he lost them. He had loved horses and had been ready to pay the price of fools, but never yet had there been a woman or an animal that he could not get when he wanted. There was that Circassian slave-girl he had stolen from the harem of a *pasha*. She was Radu's mother. Much chance the *pasha* had with all his eunuchs once Vlad had set his eyes upon the girl! And before that he had stolen the daughter of a *Boyar* and made her his wife.

And from that Russian general in Bessarabia, whose stables were guarded by armed soldiers day and night, he had stolen the best horse. The general called him into his room afterward and gave him hundreds of gold-pieces. Vlad recalled how the officer's hands shook as he begged.

"It was the horse which the Czar has mounted, the horse which the Czar has mounted! I shall have to commit suicide if it is lost."

He returned the horse and ever since the general had been his best friend. And now whatever plan he laid was thwarted by Anica, one of his own people on her mother's side.

But never had he loved a horse so much as he loved that little filly, and never before had his reputation or his rule been at stake. It was a fatal day on which he had seen Mara. The whole affair had gone too far. He could never rule his people if he were to give it up. Radu and some others were already defying his authority.

And the peasants made fun of him! On the Sunday after the first snowfall of the year a young peasant came up to him

on an old nag and in mock seriousness offered the nag for sale to the gypsy.

"You see, Vlad, I have decided that as a great chief you are entitled to own the best horse in the country."

He had become the joke of the village. Vlad could see that in the eyes of the innkeeper and his daughter. Miron, the mayor, smiled every time he saw him. Only some of the oldest peasants were not convinced of the gypsy's defeat. The priest said it every evening at the inn, as he drank his last glass before retiring.

"Vlad will get the horse. The young pups will soon grow lax. He bides his time. You will see, Vlad will get the horse."

But the young peasants did not intend to grow lax. The old barn was fitted out with tables, benches, barrels and pitchers, and soon became the meeting-place of the boys and girls of the village. Anica was there every night and her laughter could be heard above the din and noise.

Tudor was the host. His little mustache was waxed now every morning until its points were like needles, just to show his pride and insolence. To taunt Vlad he rode his horse up to the gypsy's tent one Sunday.

"How do you like my little filly, Vlad? She is not bad to look at, ha?"

On the fourth Sunday after the fair the priest announced the wedding of Tudor and Anica.

Radu managed to see the girl alone. He begged her to marry him instead. How could she throw him over like that?

But Anica sneered:

"Marry you? You! And have your father order you, 'Return to your tent,' when a man insults you! I marry a *man*. A man who is his own master. A man who refuses handfuls of gold for a horse, when I love the horse, and who knows how to guard the horse even against Vlad. That's the *man* I marry. Nobody will ever speak about him as the 'mayor's son.' You could not keep the horse against your

father's orders. You could not keep me against his orders. You are afraid of him. You would not dare to do anything without his permission. How can a woman love, marry you? How could she?"

She said this and many other things, even if her heart were not as set as her tongue was cutting.

Radu was handsomer and stronger than Tudor. There were things about him she liked. Her blood echoed to his. But she hated his slavish submission to Vlad. Why did he not act like a man? She had heard of at least one occasion when Vlad took to his tent the bride of another man on the wedding day, just to assert his rule.

The young gypsy cried. He showed her the tree near which he had first kissed her. He reminded her how she had sworn love to him and how she had taken him away from Maria, the blacksmith's daughter. But she would not hear of it.

No, she was going to marry a man who was called by his own name and not after his father. A man who could keep a horse she loved, who could refuse handfuls of gold.

"Handfuls of gold, handfuls of gold," she repeated.

A man who dared, who was brave and cunning, who could guard what he had, what she loved.

The conversation between the two had taken place on a Wednesday evening. The wedding between Anica and Tudor was to take place on the following Sunday. The *khangiu,* the innkeeper, engaged the best musicians. It was to be one of the most lavish wedding feasts. From Sunday to Sunday. The whole *khan* was decorated with colored papers and holly and paper lanterns of all kinds. In the kitchen a dozen women prepared viands and spicy food for the men.

It was to be such a feast as the village had never seen. No limit to the quantity of wine and brandy. Wedding presents for the couple were piled up against two walls. On one wall, what the women had given—the best of their looms, rolls of homespun linen and coarse silk, *borangick,* that had been blanched for months in the sun. Mats, rugs, embroid-

ered towels and folds upon folds of narrow belts of silk, *betele,* that hold together the two halves of the peasant women's skirts.

And leaning against the other wall, visible to all, were the presents of the men, each piece separate—pistols of all makes, knives with silver and ivory hilts, guns, long Turkish swords, *yataghans,* fur coats, fur hats, boots, pipes cartridge-belts. Oh, they were not niggardly, the men of Cerna Voda, and God had been good to them that year!

And just after the public exhibit of it all, and as the last few benches were placed, early in the morning on Sunday, Tudor fell headlong at the door of the inn, pale and shaking.

He had just enough strength left to blurt out, "The horse, the horse——"

"The horse what?" yelled Anica as she shook his limp arm.

"The horse—the horse——" the boy tried to explain.

"Tell me what has happened—is she killed? Did she die? What? Tell me," Anica begged, between sobs of anger. "Tell me, Tudor, tell me, tell me!"

But Tudor was becoming incoherent in his speech. He only repeated: "The horse—the horse."

Leaving Tudor prostrated on the floor, Anica darted away to the stable of the filly. It was empty.

In a few minutes the inn was beleaguered. The priest passed by on his way to church. After he had heard, he went no farther. He knew nobody would come to church. The excitement was too intense. The horse had disappeared from the stable. How? When? No one knew. The young men who had been in charge of the night watch had ridden away to find the horse, vowing they would never return without Mara.

When the excitement was at its highest, Vlad came rushing to the inn. The older peasants gave him a rousing welcome. The younger ones looked to him with a mixture of awe and contempt. A supernatural being, Vlad, the great chief. A sorcerer!

"Vlad is *still* Vlad," said the priest. "You thought you knew better, *hein* "

Jonica slapped the gypsy chief on his broad shoulders.

"Well, well, it was *we* against *them*," he said, showing the older men on one side and the young men on the other.

"But what does it all mean?" asked Vlad.

"It's about the horse, you know," said Marin, the innkeeper, clinking glasses and laughing his broadest.

"What has happened to the horse?" the gypsy yelled with all the strength of his lungs.

"Come, on, come, come, we are good sports," said several peasants as they dragged the gypsy toward the counter. "The best wine here, Marin."

Vlad tore himself away with one jerk and rushed to the dejected Tudor.

"What's the matter with the horse, you young good-for-nothing?"

"Stolen, stolen, stolen," and he spat in disgust.

The older peasants laughed at the comedy, and the priest forgot all dignity and swung his hat and giggled——

"Look at Vlad; look at him!"

In a moment there was pandemonium in the inn. Anica, on coming back from the stable, threw herself at the chief's feet and begged him to return to her the horse.

"It is my horse," she cried.

He looked hard at her.

She screamed that it was because of Mara that she had agreed to marry Tudor. It was her horse. Her horse.

Vlad swore that he knew nothing about it. His face twitched and changed colors until it turned a sickly green. as if it were bruised from the inside. He threw himself on the bench near the crying Tudor and he, too, sobbed.

They did not believe him. Jonica and the priest his stanchest admirers, least of all. The mayor came in and laughed as he shook the limp hands of the chief.

"Good work! I told you, Tudor, that sooner or later, he would get the filly."

"But I did not, Miron. I swear I did not."

They laughed. Ah, Vlad was having some fun!

Soon all the gypsies were in the inn.

They laughed and made much noise.

"Drinks here. Vlad is *still* Vlad."

What did they think of him, *hein?* Watch a horse when he wanted it! There was no better man in the country, in the world.

Vlad was sick of denying that he knew anything about the horse. Anica swore that the wedding was called off; that she would never marry a man who could not watch a horse.

During one of her passionate outbursts Radu entered the inn. His twinkling eye met the gaze of the innkeeper's daughter and she trembled from head to foot when he left the inn as unobserved as he had entered it. Vlad saw his son leave and prepared to leave also.

"Listen here," said the mayor. "Return the horse. We shall settle that later."

"I know nothing about the horse," answered Vlad, and fell limply on a chair. "I wish to God I did."

All eyes were turned on the two men. The mayor was not fair. One should not speak to Vlad in that way. One could read in their eyes that such was the thought in the heart of the peasants. No. One should not speak that way to Vlad.

"I will put you in chains, Vlad. The joke has gone too far. Show us where you have hidden the horse," and the mayor tried to assert his authority.

"I know nothing about the horse," assured Vlad, and his voice, broken and feeble, trembled.

"It's time for the wedding," broke in the priest in a conciliatory tone, as he placed himself between the two men. "We shall speak about horses later."

Tudor got up from his chair.

"There will be no wedding." Anica stamped her foot and beat the table with her hands. "The man I marry must be a *man*."

She had hardly finished the last word when Radu, mounted on the stolen filly, rode to the door of the inn.

"Mayor," he yelled, "leave the poor old man in peace. It is I who took the horse," and before any one could say a word Anica had jumped up behind him on the chestnut filly.

"Eat the wedding feast by yourselves. We will get married in the church of the next village."

Vlad left the inn, staggering on his feet like a drunkard.

"So he did it! He, he, he!"

Radu now had found strength and cunning in his passion. It was all over, all over!

When Radu returned to Cerna Voda the following day, his father had disappeared. He, Vlad, refused to be known merely as Radu's father.

And the people made merry, sang, drank and danced for seven days and seven nights. Yea, they sang and danced and drank for seven days and seven nights!

Reading List

Stories of Setting: Local Color

Abdullah, Achmed. "The Honourable Gentleman," "The Hatchetman," "Cobbler's Wax."

Atherton, Gertrude. "The Pearls of Loreto," "The Ears of Twenty Americans."

Barrie, James M. "The Courting of T'nowhead's Bell," "How Gavin Birse Put it to Mag Lownie."

Beach, Rex. "The North Wind's Malice."

Bercovici, Konrad. "Ghitza," "The Law of the Lawless," "Yancu Lautaru."

Brown, Alice. "A Day Off," "The Auction," "Told in the Poorhouse."

Cable, George. "Posson Jone'," "Père Raphael."

Connolly, James B. "The Trawler."

'CRADDOCK, CHARLES EGBERT.' "The Dancin' Party at Harrison's Cove," "Drifting down Lone Creek," "Taking the Blue Ribbon at the County Fair."

FOX, JOHN. "The Courtship of Allaphir," "The Lord's Own Level," "The Goddess of Happy Valley," "The Battle Prayer of Parson Small."

FREEMAN, MARY E. WILKINS. "A New England Nun," "A Humble Romance," "The Village Singer," "The Love of Parson Lord."

GELZER, JAY. "In the Street of a Thousand Delights," "The Gorgeous Jest," "Mei-Li the Beautiful."

HARTE, BRET. "The Luck of Roaring Camp," "The Outcasts of Poker Flat," "Tennessee's Partner."

JEWETT, SARAH O. "A White Heron," "Marsh Rosemary."

KIPLING, RUDYARD. "An Habitation Enforced," "The Incarnation of Krishna Mulvaney," "Without Benefit of Clergy."

LONDON, JACK. "On the Makaloa Mat," "Mauki," "A Son of the Sun," "The Heathen," "Lost Face."

MARTIN, HELEN R. "The Betrothal of Elypholate," "Ellie's Furnishings," "Mrs. Holzapple's Convictions."

MORRISON, ARTHUR. "On the Stairs."

PAGE, THOMAS NELSON. "Marse Chan," "Meh Lady."

PARKER, GILBERT. "The Desertion of Mahommed Selim," "While the Lamp Holds Out."

WIGGIN, KATE DOUGLAS. "The Old Peabody Pew."

THE YELLOW CAT *

By Wilbur Daniel Steele

At least once in my life I have had the good fortune to board a deserted vessel at sea. I say "good fortune" because it has left me the memory of a singular impression. I have felt a ghost of the same thing two or three times since then when peeping through the doorway of an abandoned house.

Now that vessel was not dead. She was a good vessel, a sound vessel, even a handsome vessel, in her blunt-bowed, coastwise way. She sailed under four lowers across as blue and glittering a sea as I have ever known, and there was not a point in her sailing that one could lay a finger upon as wrong. And yet, passing that schooner at two miles, one knew, somehow, that no hand was on her wheel. Sometimes I can imagine a vessel stricken like that moving over the empty spaces of the sea, carrying it off quite well were it not for that indefinable suggestion of a stagger; and I can think of all those ocean gods, in whom no landsman will ever believe, looking at one another and tapping their foreheads with just the shadow of a smile.

I wonder if they all scream—these ships that have lost their souls? Mine screamed. We heard her voice, like nothing I have ever heard before, when we rowed under her counter to read her name—the *Marionnette* it was, of Halifax. I remember how it made me shiver, there in the full blaze of the sun, to hear her going on so, railing and screaming in that stark fashion. And I remember, too, how our footsteps, pat-

* From *Land's End;* copyright, 1918, by Harper & Brothers. Reprinted by permission of the author and the publishers.

tering through the vacant internals in search of that haggard utterance, made me think of the footsteps of hurrying warders roused in the night.

And we found a parrot in a cage; that was all. It wanted water. We gave it water and went away to look things over, keeping pretty close together, all of us. In the quarters the table was set for four. Two men had begun to eat, by the evidences of the plates. Nowhere in the vessel was there any sign of disorder, except one sea-chest broken out, evidently in haste. Her papers were gone and the stern davits were empty. That is how the case stood that day, and that is how it has stood to this. I saw this same *Marionnette* a week later, tied up to a Hoboken dock, where she awaited news from her owners; but even there, in the midst of all the water-front bustle, I could not get rid of the feeling that she was still very far away—in a sort of shippish other-world.

The thing happens now and then. Sometimes half a dozen years will go by without a solitary wanderer of this sort crossing the ocean paths, and then in a single season perhaps several of them will turn up: vacant waifs, impassive and mysterious—a quarter-column of tidings tucked away on the second page of the evening paper.

That is where I read the story about the *Abbie Rose.* I recollect how painfully awkward and out-of-place it looked there, cramped between ruled black edges and smelling of landsman's ink—this thing that had to do essentially with air and vast colored spaces. I forget the exact words of the heading—something like "Abandoned Craft Picked Up At Sea"—but I still have the clipping itself, couched in the formal patter of the marine-news writer:

The first hint of another mystery of the sea came in to-day when the schooner *Abbie Rose* dropped anchor in the upper river, manned only by a crew of one. It appears that the outbound freighter *Mercury* sighted the *Abbie Rose* off Block Island on Thursday last, acting in a suspicious manner. A boat-party sent aboard found the schooner in perfect order and

condition, sailing under four lower sails, the topsails being pursed up to the mastheads but not stowed. With the exception of a yellow cat, the vessel was found to be utterly deserted, though her small boat still hung in the davits. No evidences of disorder were visible in any part of the craft. The dishes were washed up, the stove in the galley was still slightly warm to the touch, everything in its proper place with the exception of the vessel's papers, which were not to be found.

All indications being for fair weather, Captain Rohmer of the *Mercury* detailed two of his company to bring the find back to this port, a distance of one hundred and fifteen miles. The only man available with a knowledge of the fore-and-aft rig was Stewart McCord, the second engineer. A seaman by the name of Björnsen was sent with him. McCord arrived this noon, after a very heavy voyage of five days, reporting that Björnsen had fallen overboard while shaking out the foretopsail. McCord himself showed evidences of the hardships he has passed through, being almost a nervous wreck.

Stewart McCord! Yes, Stewart McCord would have a knowledge of the fore-and-aft rig, or of almost anything else connected with the affairs of the sea. It happened that I used to know this fellow. I had even been quite chummy with him in the old days—that is, to the extent of drinking too many beers with him in certain hot-country ports. I remembered him as a stolid and deliberate sort of a person, with an amazing hodgepodge of learning, a stamp collection, and a theory about the effects of tropical sunshine on the Caucasian race, to which I have listened half of more than one night, stretched out naked on a freighter's deck. He had not impressed me as a fellow who would be bothered by his nerves.

And there was another thing about the story which struck me as rather queer. Perhaps it is a relic of my seafaring days, but I have always been a conscientious reader of the weather reports; and I could remember no weather in the past week sufficient to shake a man out of a top, especially

a man by the name of Björnsen—a thoroughgoing seafaring name.

I was destined to hear more of this in the evening, from the ancient boatman who rowed me out on the upper river. He had been to sea in his day. He knew enough to wonder about this thing, even to indulge in a little superstitious awe about it.

"No sir-ee. Something *happened* to them four chaps. And another thing——"

I fancied I heard a sea-bird whining in the darkness overhead. A shape moved out of the gloom ahead, passed to the left, lofty and silent, and merged once more with the gloom behind—a barge at anchor, with the sea-grass clinging around her water-line.

"Funny about that other chap," the old fellow speculated. "Björnsen—I b'lieve he called 'im. Now that story sounds to me kind of——" He feathered his oars with a suspicious jerk and peered at me. "This McCord a friend of yourn?" he inquired.

"In a way," I said.

"Hm-m—well——" He turned on his thwart to squint ahead. "There she is," he announced, with something of relief, I thought.

It was hard at that time of night to make anything but a black blotch out of the *Abbie Rose*. Of course I could see that she was pot-bellied, like the rest of the coastwise sisterhood. And that McCord had not stowed his topsails. I could make them out, pursed at the mastheads and hanging down as far as the cross-trees, like huge, over-ripe pears. Then I recollected that he had found them so—probably had not touched them since; a queer way to leave tops, it seemed to me. I could see also the glowing tip of a cigar floating restlessly along the farther rail. I called: "McCord! Oh, McCord!"

The spark came swimming across the deck. "Hello! Hello, there—ah——" There was a note of querulous uneasiness

there that somehow jarred with my remembrance of this man.

"Ridgeway," I explained.

He echoed the name uncertainly, still with that suggestion of peevishness, hanging over the rail and peering down at us. "Oh! By gracious!" he exclaimed, abruptly. "I'm glad to see you, Ridgeway. I had a boatman coming out before this, but I guess—well, I guess he'll be along. By gracious! I'm glad——"

"I'll not keep you," I told the gnome, putting the money in his palm and reaching for the rail. McCord lent me a hand on my wrist. Then when I stood squarely on the deck beside him he appeared to forget my presence, leaned forward heavily on the rail, and squinted after my waning boatman.

"Ahoy—boat!" he called out, sharply, shielding his lips with his hands. His violence seemed to bring him out of the blank, for he fell immediately to puffing strongly at his cigar and explaining in rather a shame-voiced way that he was beginning to think his own boatman had "passed him up."

"Come in and have a nip," he urged with an abrupt heartiness, clapping me on the shoulder.

"So you've——" I did not say what I had intended. I was thinking that in the old days McCord had made rather a fetish of touching nothing stronger than beer. Neither had he been of the shoulder-clapping sort. "So you've got something aboard?" I shifted.

"Dead men's liquor," he chuckled. It gave me a queer feeling in the pit of my stomach to hear him. I began to wish I had not come, but there was nothing for it now but to follow him into the after-house. The cabin itself might have been nine feet square, with three bunks occupying the port side. To the right opened the master's state-room, and a door in the forward bulkhead led to the galley.

I took in these features at a casual glance. Then, hardly knowing why I did it, I began to examine them with greater care.

"Have you a match?" I asked. My voice sounded very small, as though something unheard of had happened to all the air.

"Smoke?" he asked. "I'll get you a cigar."

"No." I took the proffered match, scratched it on the side of the galley door, and passed out. There seemed to be a thousand pans there, throwing my match back at me from every wall of the box-like compartment. Even McCord's eyes, in the doorway, were large and round and shining. He probably thought me crazy. Perhaps I was, a little. I ran the match along close to the ceiling and came upon a rusty hook a little aport of the center.

"There," I said. "Was there anything hanging from this —er—say a parrot—or something, McCord?" The match burned my fingers and went out.

"What do you mean?" McCord demanded from the doorway. I got myself back into the comfortable yellow glow of the cabin before I answered, and then it was a question.

"Do you happen to know anything about this craft's personal history?"

"No. What are you talking about! Why?"

"Well, I do," I offered. "For one thing, she's changed her name. And it happens this isn't the first time she's—— Well, damn it all, fourteen years ago I helped pick up this whatever-she-is off the Virginia Capes—in the same sort of condition. There you are!" I was yapping like a nerve-strung puppy.

McCord leaned forward with his hands on the table, bringing his face beneath the fan of the hanging-lamp. For the first time I could mark how shockingly it had changed. It was almost colorless. The jaw had somehow lost its old-time security and the eyes seemed to be loose in their sockets. I had expected him to start at my announcement; he only blinked at the light.

"I am not surprised," he remarked at length. "After what I've seen and heard——" He lifted his fist and brought it

down with a sudden crash on the table. "Man—let's have a nip!"

He was off before I could say a word, fumbling out of sight in the narrow state-room. Presently he reappeared, holding a glass in either hand and a dark bottle hugged between his elbows. Putting the glasses down, he held up the bottle between his eyes and the lamp, and its shadow, falling across his face, green and luminous at the core, gave him a ghastly look —like a mutilation or an unspeakable birth-mark. He shook the bottle gently and chuckled his "Dead men's liquor" again. Then he poured two half-glasses of the clear gin, swallowed his portion, and sat down.

"A parrot," he mused, a little of the liquor's color creeping into his cheeks. "No, this time it was a cat, Ridgeway. A yellow cat. She was——"

"Was?" I caught him up. "What's happened—what's become of her?"

"Vanished. Evaporated. I haven't seen her since night before last, when I caught her trying to lower the boat——"

"Stop it!" It was I who banged the table now, without any of the reserve of decency. "McCord, you're drunk—*drunk,* I tell you. A *cat!* Let a *cat* throw you off your head like this! She's probably hiding out below this minute, on affairs of her own."

"Hiding?" He regarded me for a moment with the queer superiority of the damned. "I guess you don't realize how many times I've been over this hulk, from decks to keelson, with a mallet and a foot-rule."

"Or fallen overboard," I shifted, with less assurance. "Like this fellow Björnsen. By the way, McCord——" I stopped there on account of the look in his eyes.

He reached out, poured himself a shot, swallowed it, and got up to shuffle about the confined quarters. I watched their restless circuit—my friend and his jumping shadow. He stopped and bent forward to examine a Sunday-supple-

ment chromo tacked on the wall, and the two heads drew together, as though there were something to whisper. Of a sudden I seemed to hear the old gnome croaking, "Now that story sounds to me kind of——"

McCord straightened up and turned to face me.

"What do you know about Björnsen?" he demanded.

"Well—only what they had you saying in the papers," I told him.

"Pshaw!" He snapped his fingers, tossing the affair aside. "I found her log," he announced in quite another voice.

"You did, eh? I judged, from what I read in the paper, that there wasn't a sign."

"No, no; I happened on this the other night, under the mattress in there." He jerked his head toward the state-room. "Wait!" I heard him knocking things over in the dark and mumbling at them. After a moment he came out and threw on the table a long, cloth-covered ledger, of the common commercial sort. It lay open at about the middle, showing close script running indiscriminately across the column ruling.

"When I said 'log,'" he went on, "I guess I was going it a little strong. At least, I wouldn't want that sort of log found around *my* vessel. Let's call it a personal record. Here's his picture, somewhere——" He shook the book by its back and a common kodak blue-print fluttered to the table. It was the likeness of a solid man with a paunch, a huge square beard, small squinting eyes, and a bald head. "What do you make of him—a writing chap?"

"From the nose down, yes," I estimated. "From the nose up, he will 'tend to his own business if you will 'tend to yours, strictly."

McCord slapped his thigh. "By gracious! that's the fellow! He hates the Chinaman. He knows as well as anything he ought not to put down in black and white how intolerably he hates the Chinaman, and yet he must sneak off to his cubby-hole and suck his pencil, and—how is it Stevenson has it?—

the 'agony of composition,' you remember. Can you imagine the fellow, Ridgeway, bundling down here with the fever on him——"

"About the Chinaman," I broke in. "I think you said something about a Chinaman?"

"Yes. The cook, he must have been. I gather he wasn't the master's pick, by the reading-matter here. Probably clapped on to him by the owners—shifted from one of their others at the last moment; a queer trick. Listen." He picked up the book and, running over the pages with a selective thumb, read:

"*August second.*—First part, moderate southwesterly breeze—

and so forth—er—but here he comes to it:

"Anything can happen to a man at sea, even a funeral. In special to a Chinyman, who is of no account to social welfare, being a barbarian as I look at it.

"Something of a philosopher, you see. And did you get the reserve in that 'even a funeral'? An artist, I tell you. But wait: let me catch him a bit wilder. Here:

"I'll get that mustard-colored——[This is back a couple of days.] Never can hear the —— coming, in them carpet slippers. Turned round and found him standing right to my back this morning. Could have stuck a knife into me easy. 'Look here!' says I, and fetched him a tap on the ear that will make him walk louder next time, I warrant. He could have stuck a knife into me easy.

"A clear case of moral funk, I should say. Can you imagine the fellow, Ridgeway——"

"Yes; oh, yes." I was ready with a phrase of my own. "A man handicapped with an imagination. You see he can't quite understand this 'barbarian,' who has him beaten by about thirty centuries of civilization—and his imagination has to

have something to chew on, something to hit—a 'tap on the ear,' you know."

"By gracious! that's the ticket!" McCord pounded his knee. "And now we've got another chap going to pieces—Peters, he calls him. Refuses to eat dinner on August the third, claiming he caught the Chink making passes over the chowder-pot with his thumb. Can you believe it, Ridgeway—in this very cabin here?" Then he went on with a suggestion of haste, as though he had somehow made a slip. "Well, at any rate, the disease seems to be catching. Next day it's Bach, the second seaman, who begins to feel the gaff. Listen:

"Bach he comes to me to-night, complaining he's being watched. He claims the —— has got the evil eye. Says he can see you through a two-inch bulkhead, and the like. The Chink's laying in his bunk, turned the other way. 'Why don't you go aboard of him?' says I. The Dutcher says nothing, but goes over to his own bunk and feels under the straw. When he comes back he's looking queer. 'By God!' says he, 'the devil has swiped my gun!' . . . Now if that's true there is going to be hell to pay in this vessel very quick. I figure I'm still master of this vessel."

"The evil eye," I grunted. "Consciences gone wrong there somewhere."

"Not altogether, Ridgeway. I can see that yellow man peeking. Now just figure yourself, say, eight thousand miles from home, out on the water alone with a crowd of heathen fanatics crazy from fright, looking around for guns and so on. Don't you believe you'd keep an eye around the corners, kind of—eh? I'll bet a hat he was taking it all in, lying there in his bunk, 'turned the other way.' Eh? I pity the poor cuss—— Well, there's only one more entry after that. He's good and mad. Here:

"Now, by God! this is the end. My gun's gone, too; right out from under lock and key, by God! I been talking with

Bach this morning. Not to let on, I had him in to clean my lamp. There's more ways than one, he says, and so do I."

McCord closed the book and dropped it on the table. "Finis," he said. "The rest is blank paper."

"Well!" I will confess I felt much better than I had for some time past. "There's *one* 'mystery of the sea' gone to pot, at any rate. And now, if you don't mind, I think I'll have another of your nips, McCord."

He pushed my glass across the table and got up, and behind his back his shadow rose to scour the corners of the room, like an incorruptible sentinel. I forgot to take up my gin, watching him. After an uneasy minute or so he came back to the table and pressed the tip of a forefinger on the book.

"Ridgeway," he said, "you don't seem to understand. This particular 'mystery of the sea' hasn't been scratched yet—not even *scratched,* Ridgeway." He sat down and leaned forward, fixing me with a didactic finger. "What happened?"

"Well, I have an idea the 'barbarian' got them, when it came to the pinch."

"And let the—remains over the side?"

"I should say."

"And they came back and got the 'barbarian' and let *him* over the side, eh? There were none left, you remember."

"Oh, good Lord, I don't know!" I flared with a childish resentment at this catechizing of his. But his finger remained there, challenging.

"I do," he announced. "The Chinaman put them over the side, as we have said. And then, after that, he died—of wounds about the head."

"So?" I had still sarcasm.

"You will remember," he went on, "that the skipper did not happen to mention a cat, a *yellow* cat, in his confessions."

"McCord," I begged him, "please drop it. Why in thunder *should* he mention a cat?"

"True. Why *should* he mention a cat? I think one of the

reasons why he should *not* mention a cat is because there did not happen to be a cat aboard at that time."

"Oh, all right!" I reached out and pulled the bottle to my side of the table. Then I took out my watch. "If you don't mind," I suggested, "I think we'd better be going ashore. I've got to get to my office rather early in the morning. What do you say?"

He said nothing for the moment, but his finger had dropped. He leaned back and stared straight into the core of the light above, his eyes squinting.

"He would have been from the south of China, probably." He seemed to be talking to himself. "There's a considerable sprinkling of the belief down there, I've heard. It's an uncanny business—this transmigration of souls——"

Personally, I had had enough of it. McCord's fingers came groping across the table for the bottle. I picked it up hastily and let it go through the open companionway, where it died with a faint gurgle, out somewhere on the river.

"Now," I said to him, shaking the vagrant wrist, "either you come ashore with me or you go in there and get under the blankets. You're drunk, McCord—*drunk*. Do you hear me?"

"Ridgeway," he pronounced, bringing his eyes down to me and speaking very slowly. "You're a fool, if you can't see better than that. I'm not drunk. I'm sick. I haven't slept for three nights—and now I can't. And you say—you——" He went to pieces very suddenly, jumped up, pounded the legs of his chair on the decking, and shouted at me: "And you say that, you—you landlubber, you office coddler! You're so comfortably sure that everything in the world is cut and dried. Come back to the water again and learn how to wonder—and stop talking like a damn fool. Do you know where—— Is there anything in your municipal budget to tell me where Björnsen went? Listen!" He sat down, waving me to do the same, and went on with a sort of desperate repression.

"It happened on the first night after we took this hellion. I'd stood the wheel most of the afternoon—off and on, that

is, because she sails herself uncommonly well. Just put her on a reach, you know, and she carries it off pretty well——"

"I know," I nodded.

"Well, we mugged up about seven o'clock. There was a good deal of canned stuff in the galley, and Björnsen wasn't a bad hand with a kettle—a thoroughgoing Square-head he was—tall and lean and yellow-haired, with little fat, round cheeks and a white mustache. Not a bad chap at all. He took the wheel to stand till midnight, and I turned in, but I didn't drop off for quite a spell. I could hear his boots wandering around over my head, padding off forward, coming back again. I heard him whistling now and then—an outlandish air. Occasionally I could see the shadow of his head waving in a block of moonlight that lay on the decking right down there in front of the state-room door. It came from the companion; the cabin was dark because we were going easy on the oil. They hadn't left a great deal, for some reason or other."

McCord leaned back and described with his finger where the illumination had cut the decking.

"There! I could see it from my bunk, as I lay, you understand. I must have almost dropped off once when I heard him fiddling around out here in the cabin, and then he said something in a whisper, just to find out if I was still awake, I suppose. I asked him what the matter was. He came and poked his head in the door."

"'The breeze is going out,' says he. 'I was wondering if we couldn't get a little more sail on her.' Only I can't give you his fierce Square-head tang. 'How about the tops?' he suggested.

"I was so sleepy I didn't care, and I told him so. 'All right,' he says, 'but I thought I might shake out one of them tops.' Then I heard him blow at something outside. 'Scat, you——!' Then: 'This cat's going to set me crazy, Mr. McCord,' he says, 'following me around everywhere.' He gave a kick,

and I saw something yellow floating across the moonlight. It never made a sound—just floated. You wouldn't have known it ever lit anywhere, just like——"

McCord stopped and drummed a few beats on the table with his fist, as though to bring himself back to the straight narrative.

"I went to sleep," he began again. "I dreamed about a lot of things. I woke up sweating. You know how glad you are to wake up after a dream like that and find none of it so? Well, I turned over and settled to go off again, and then I got a little more awake and thought to myself it must be pretty near time for me to go on deck. I scratched a match and looked at my watch. 'That fellow must be either a good chap or asleep,' I said to myself. And I rolled out quick and went above-decks. He wasn't at the wheel. I called him: 'Björnsen! Björnsen!' No answer."

McCord was really telling a story now. He paused for a long moment, one hand shielding an ear and his eyeballs turned far up.

"That was the first time I really went over the hulk," he ran on. "I got out a lantern and started at the forward end of the hold, and I worked aft, and there was nothing there. Not a sign, or a stain, or a scrap of clothing, or anything. You may believe that I began to feel funny inside. I went over the decks and the rails and the house itself—inch by inch. Not a trace. I went out aft again. The cat sat on the wheel-box, washing her face. I hadn't noticed the scar on her head before, running down between her ears—rather a new scar—three or four days old, I should say. It looked ghastly and blue-white in the flat moonlight. I ran over and grabbed her up to heave her over the side—you understand how upset I was. Now you know a cat will squirm around and grab something when you hold it like that, generally speaking. This one didn't. She just drooped and began to purr and looked up at me out of her moonlit eyes under that

scar. I dropped her on the deck and backed off. You remember Björnsen had *kicked* her—and I didn't want anything like that happening to——"

The narrator turned upon me with a sudden heat, leaned over and shook his finger before my face.

"There you go!" he cried. "You, with your stout stone buildings and your policemen and your neighborhood church—you're so damn sure. But I'd just like to see you out there, alone, with the moon setting, and all the lights gone tall and queer, and a shipmate——" He lifted his hand overhead, the finger-tips pressed together and then suddenly separated as though he had released an impalpable something into the air.

"Go on," I told him.

"I felt more like you do, when it got light again, and warm and sunshiny. I said 'Bah!' to the whole business. I even fed the cat, and I slept awhile on the roof of the house—I was so sure. We lay dead most of the day, without a streak of air. But that night——! Well, that night I hadn't got over being sure yet. It takes quite a jolt, you know, to shake loose several dozen generations. A fair, steady breeze had come along, the glass was high, she was staying herself like a doll, and so I figured I could get a little rest, lying below in the bunk, even if I didn't sleep.

"I tried not to sleep, in case something should come up—a squall or the like. But I think I must have dropped off once or twice. I remember I heard something fiddling around in the galley, and I hollered 'Scat!' and everything was quiet again. I rolled over and lay on my left side, staring at that square of moonlight outside my door for a long time. You'll think it was a dream—what I saw there."

"Go on," I said.

"Call this table-top the spot of light, roughly," he said. He placed a finger-tip at about the middle of the forward edge and drew it slowly toward the center. "Here, what would correspond with the upper side of the companionway, there came

down very gradually the shadow of a tail. I watched it streaking out there across the deck, wiggling the slightest bit now and then. When it had come down about half-way across the light, the solid part of the animal—its shadow, you understand—began to appear, quite big and round. But how could she hang there, done up in a ball, from the hatch?"

He shifted his finger back to the edge of the table and puddled it around to signify the shadowed body.

"I fished my gun out from behind my back. You see, I was feeling funny again. Then I started to slide one foot over the edge of the bunk, always with my eyes on that shadow. Now I swear I didn't make the sound of a pin dropping, but I had no more than moved a muscle when that shadowed thing twisted itself around in a flash—and there on the floor before me was the profile of a man's head, upside down, listening—a man's head with a tail of hair."

McCord got up hastily and stepped over in front of the state-room door, where he bent down and scratched a match.

"See," he said, holding the tiny flame above a splintered scar on the boards. "You wouldn't think a man would be fool enough to shoot at a shadow?"

He came back and sat down.

"It seemed to me all hell had shaken loose. You've no idea, Ridgeway, the rumpus a gun raises in a box like this. I found out afterward the slug ricochetted into the galley, bringing down a couple of pans—and that helped. Oh, yes, I got out of here quick enough. I stood there, half out of the companion, with my hands on the hatch and the gun between them, and my shadow running off across the top of the house shivering before my eyes like a dry leaf. There wasn't a whisper of sound in the world—just the pale water floating past and the sails towering up like a pair of twittering ghosts. And everything that crazy color——

"Well, in a minute I saw it, just abreast of the mainmast, crouched down in the shadow of the weather rail, sneaking off forward very slowly. This time I took a good long sight

before I let go. Did you ever happen to see black-powder smoke in the moonlight? It puffed out perfectly round, like a big, pale balloon, this did, and for a second something was bounding through it—without a sound you understand—something a shade solider than the smoke and big as a cow, it looked to me. It passed from the weather side to the lee and ducked behind the sweep of the mainsail like *that*——" McCord snapped his thumb and forefinger under the light.

"Go on," I said. "What did you do then?"

McCord regarded me for an instant from beneath his lids, uncertain. His fist hung above the table. "You're——" He hesitated, his lips working vacantly. A forefinger came out of the fist and gesticulated before my face. "If you're laughing, why damn me, I'll——"

"Go on," I repeated. "What did you do then?"

"I followed the thing." He was still watching me sullenly. "I got up and went forward along the roof of the house, so as to have an eye on either rail. You understand, this business had to be done with. I kept straight along. Every shadow I wasn't absolutely sure of I *made* sure of—point-blank. And I rounded the thing up at the very stem—sitting on the butt of the bowsprit, Ridgeway, washing her yellow face under the moon. I didn't make any bones about it this time. I put the bad end of that gun against the scar on her head and squeezed the trigger. It snicked on an empty shell. I tell you a fact; I was almost deafened by the report that didn't come.

"She followed me aft. I couldn't get away from her. I went and sat on the wheel-box and she came and sat on the edge of the house, facing me. And there we stayed for upwards of an hour, without moving. Finally she went over and stuck her paw in the water-pan I'd set out for her; then she raised her head and looked at me and yawled. At sundown there'd been two quarts of water in that pan. You wouldn't think a cat could get away with two quarts of water in——"

He broke off again and considered me with a sort of weary defiance.

"What's the use?" He spread out his hands in a gesture of hopelessness. "I knew you wouldn't believe it when I started. You *couldn't.* It would be a kind of blasphemy against the sacred institution of pavements. You're too damn smug, Ridgeway. I can't shake you. You haven't sat two days and two nights, keeping your eyes open by sheer teeth-gritting, until they got used to it and wouldn't shut any more. When I tell you I found that yellow thing snooping around the davits, and three bights of the boat-fall loosened out, plain on deck—you grin behind your collar. When I tell you she padded off forward and evaporated—flickered back to hell and hasn't been seen since, then—why, you explain to yourself that I'm drunk. I tell you——" He jerked his head back abruptly and turned to face the companionway, his lips still apart. He listened so for a moment, then he shook himself out of it and went on:

"I tell you, Ridgeway, I've been over this hulk with a foot-rule. There's not a cubic inch I haven't accounted for, not a plank I——"

This time he got up and moved a step toward the companion, where he stood with his head bent forward and slightly to the side. After what might have been twenty seconds of this he whispered, "Do you hear?"

Far and far away down the reach a ferry-boat lifted its infinitesimal wail, and then the silence of the night river came down once more, profound and inscrutable. A corner of the wick above my head sputtered a little—that was all.

"Hear what?" I whispered back. He lifted a cautious finger toward the opening.

"Somebody. Listen."

The man's faculties must have been keyed up to the pitch of his nerves, for to me the night remained as voiceless as a subterranean cavern. I became intensely irritated with him;

within my mind I cried out against this infatuated pantomime of his. And then, of a sudden, there was a sound—the dying rumor of a ripple, somewhere in the outside darkness, as though an object had been let into the water with extreme care.

"You heard?"

I nodded. The ticking of the watch in my vest pocket came to my ears, shucking off the leisurely seconds, while McCord's finger-nails gnawed at the palms of his hands. The man was really sick. He wheeled on me and cried out, "My God! Ridgeway—why don't we go out?"

I, for one, refused to be a fool. I passed him and climbed out of the opening; he followed far enough to lean his elbows on the hatch, his feet and legs still within the secure glow of the cabin.

"You see, there's nothing." My wave of assurance was possibly a little overdone.

"Over there," he muttered, jerking his head toward the shore lights. "Something swimming."

I moved to the corner of the house and listened.

"River thieves," I argued. "The place is full of——"

"Ridgeway. Look behind you!"

Perhaps it *is* the pavements—but no matter; I am not ordinarily a jumping sort. And yet there was something in the quality of that voice beyond my shoulder that brought the sweat stinging through the pores of my scalp even while I was in the act of turning.

A cat sat there on the hatch, expressionless and immobile in the gloom.

I did not say anything. I turned and went below. McCord was there already, standing on the farther side of the table. After a moment or so the cat followed and sat on her haunches at the foot of the ladder and stared at us without winking.

"I think she wants something to eat," I said to McCord.

He lit a lantern and went out into the galley. Returning with a chunk of salt beef, he threw it into the farther corner.

The cat went over and began to tear at it, her muscles playing with convulsive shadow-lines under the sagging yellow hide.

And now it was she who listened, to something beyond the reach of even McCord's faculties, her neck stiff and her ears flattened. I looked at McCord and found him brooding at the animal with a sort of listless malevolence. *"Quick!* She has kittens somewhere about." I shook his elbow sharply. "When she starts, now——"

"You don't seem to understand," he mumbled. "It wouldn't be any use."

She had turned now and was making for the ladder with the soundless agility of her race. I grasped McCord's wrist and dragged him after me, the lantern banging against his knees. When we came up the cat was already amidships, a scarcely discernible shadow at the margin of our lantern's ring. She stopped and looked back at us with her luminous eyes, appeared to hesitate, uneasy at our pursuit of her, shifted here and there with quick, soft bounds, and stopped to fawn with her back arched at the foot of the mast. Then she was off with an amazing suddenness into the shadows forward.

"Lively now!" I yelled at McCord. He came pounding along behind me, still protesting that it was of no use. Abreast of the foremast I took the lantern from him to hold above my head.

"You see," he complained, peering here and there over the illuminated deck. "I tell you, Ridgeway, this thing——" But my eyes were in another quarter, and I slapped him on the shoulder.

"An engineer—an engineer to the core," I cried at him. "Look aloft, man."

Our quarry was almost to the cross-trees, clambering up the shrouds with a smartness no sailor has ever come to, her yellow body, cut by the moving shadows of the ratlines, a queer sight against the mat of the night. McCord closed his mouth and opened it again for two words: "By gracious!" The following instant he had the lantern and was after her. I

watched him go up above my head—a ponderous, swaying climber into the sky—come to the cross-trees, and squat there with his knees clamped around the mast. The clear star of the lantern shot this way and that for a moment, then it disappeared, and in its place there sprang out a bag of yellow light, like a fire-balloon at anchor in the heavens. I could see the shadows of his head and hands moving monstrously over the inner surface of the sail, and muffled exclamations without meaning came down to me. After a moment he drew out his head and called: "All right—they're here. Heads! there below!"

I ducked at his warning, and something spanked on the planking a yard from my feet. I stepped over to the vague blur on the deck and picked up a slipper—a slipper covered with some woven straw stuff and soled with a matted felt, perhaps a half-inch thick. Another struck somewhere abaft the mast, and then McCord reappeared above and began to stagger down the shrouds. Under his left arm he hugged a curious assortment of litter, a sheaf of papers, a brace of revolvers, a gray kimono, and a soiled apron.

"Well," he said when he had come to deck, "I feel like a man who has gone to hell and come back again. You know I'd come to the place where I really believed that about the cat. When you think of it—— By gracious! we haven't come so far from the jungle, after all."

We went aft and below and sat down at the table as we had been. McCord broke a prolonged silence.

"I'm sort of glad he got away—poor cuss! He's probably climbing up a wharf this minute, shivering and scared to death. Over toward the gas-tanks, by the way he was swimming. By gracious! now that the world's turned over straight again, I feel I could sleep a solid week. Poor cuss! can you imagine him, Ridgeway——"

"Yes," I broke in. "I think I can. He must have lost his nerve when he made out your smoke and shinnied up there to stow away, taking the ship's papers with him. He would have

attached some profound importance to them—remember, the 'barbarian,' eight thousand miles from home. Probably couldn't read a word. I suppose the cat followed him—the traditional source of food. He must have wanted water badly."

"I should say! He wouldn't have taken the chances he did."

"Well," I announced, "at any rate, I can say it now—there's another 'mystery of the sea' gone to pot."

McCord lifted his heavy lids.

"No," he mumbled. "The mystery is that a man who has been to sea all his life could sail around for three days with a man bundled up in his top and not know it. When I think of him peeking down at me—and playing off that damn cat—probably without realizing it—scared to death—by gracious! Ridgeway, there was a pair of funks aboard this craft, eh? Wow—yow—I could sleep——"

"I should think you could."

McCord did not answer.

"By the way," I speculated. "I guess you were right about Björnsen, McCord—that is, his fooling with the foretop. He must have been caught all of a bunch, eh?"

Again McCord failed to answer. I looked up, mildly surprised, and found his head hanging back over his chair and his mouth opened wide. He was asleep.

Reading List

Stories of Setting: Atmosphere

Abdullah, Achmed. "A Simple Act of Piety."
Blackwood, Algernon. *Day and Night Stories; The Listener and Other Stories.*
Child, Richard Washburn. "The Velvet Black."
Conrad, Joseph. "The Heart of Darkness," "The Brute."
Cutting, Mary S. "The Blossoming Rod," "Father's Little Joke."
Doyle, A. Conan. "The Horror of the Heights."
Ferber, Edna. "April 25th, As Usual."

GARSHIN, W. M. "Four Days."
JAMES, HENRY. "The Turn of the Screw."
KIPLING, RUDYARD. "They."
LONDON, JACK. "The White Silence," "To Build a Fire."
NORRIS, FRANK. "A Memorandum of Sudden Death."
POE, EDGAR ALLAN. "The Fall of the House of Usher."
STEELE, WILBUR D. "A Man's A Fool."

THE BUCKPASSER *

By Hugh McNair Kahler

I

As it became manifest that he was not to be discharged, Wilbur Haskett was conscious of something like disappointment. Not that he actually enjoyed the process of ouster—it had distressing concomitants and consequences which he exceedingly disliked—but he had discovered that it also possessed redeeming qualities. In some respects, indeed, it was distinctly better to be fired than to be hired. He had a liberal acquaintance with both.

Dismissal had, at its worst, a refreshing finality. It closed a chapter with a thumping full-stop leaving Wilbur in no perplexity concerning his course. Usually, too, it involved a rather explosive interview, and the effect of emerging to the relative calm of the outer air was like the agreeable peace which supersedes the thunder-storm. But most of all Wilbur liked the entire freedom of responsibility which he had found to be the inalienable privilege of the dischargee.

Whatever the alleged reasons leading up to dismissal, it was incontestable that Wilbur himself had had no vote or voice in the decision itself. To be fired, indeed, connoted a passivity equivalent to that of the acquiescent missile in the cannon's angry mouth. Always, after his adventures in discharge, Wilbur had something of the light, joyous irresponsibility of the thistledown, the sense of being carried in a current against

* From *Babel;* copyright, 1921, by G. P. Putnam's Sons. Reprinted by permission of the author and the publishers.

which there was neither means nor obligation to struggle. This consciousness of release he had begun to enjoy in anticipation when Mr. Thurlow explicitly disclaimed sinister intentions.

"I've had first-rate reports about you, Haskett. You seem to be the only man in the office who hasn't earned half a dozen grudges. And you seem to know your work, too."

Wilbur fumbled for a response and compromised on a grin, which committed him to nothing. It was clear that he was not to be fired just yet. This being evident, the interview lost interest at once. He watched Mr. Thurlow politely, aware of an unfamiliar anxiety in the president's face. Thomas Thurlow usually exhibited a mien of aloof and impressive dignity. He was a tall, big-boned man, and the years had added a certain effect of power to his bulk. His lips, in their normal aspect, fitted nicely together; the deep line curving from nostril around the end of the mouth registered a fixity of purpose, a determination, which Wilbur found rather awe-inspiring. But today there was an obvious touch of indecision, of concern, in the pink, clean-shaven face, a note of dubiety in the voice.

"Larner himself speaks well of you," pursued Thurlow, in the tone of one who argues with himself. "You're the only man in the outfit he has a good word for. I'd be disposed to doubt his judgement if it weren't confirmed by Mr. McIlhenny and Mr. Torbitt. And the men on the road all seem to like you, too."

Again Wilbur confined himself to a grin, but he began to be uneasy. All this compliment plainly led up to something. He could not foresee the conclusion, but the premise made him mildly uncomfortable. He thought, almost wistfully, of occasions on which he had listened to very different opinions of his character and ability.

"I'd hesitate to do it, on my own judgement," pursued Thurlow. "You're pretty young, and your record, before you came to us, looks discouraging. In fact I wouldn't have given

you a trial, in the first place, if it hadn't been for your father. But you've done well as far as I can find out, and I'm so sick and tired of straightening out quarrels that I'm inclined to take more of a chance than I ought to."

He passed his hand across his forehead, as if to iron out the lines which grooved it vertically. Wilbur, without knowing why, was suddenly sorry for him. He looked old and tired and worried.

"Larner's a first-class man," said Thurlow. "We were glad to get him. He's a live wire. But—" he swung a hand wearily—"he's no diplomat. He's stirred up a fuss with every other department-head in the factory; he's rubbed all the travellers the wrong way. He's even got us into fights with some of our best customers. And he won't compromise, won't give an inch."

Wilbur nodded. For these very qualities A. W. Larner commanded his reluctant admiration. Ever since he had begun his labour as assistant to the sales manager he had observed Larner's electric personality with something like awe. Energy crackled from A. W. Larner's finger-tips; decision rang in his voice; conviction was engraved indelibly in his lean, grim lantern jaws. Aware of his own lamentable shortcomings in these respects, Wilbur regarded his superior with deepening reverence, untinged, however, with envy. The mere thought of emulating A. W. Larner's dynamic example made Wilbur feel tired. But he recognized the man's quality and paid it due measure of esteem.

"We've come to the show-down, at last," said Thurlow. "Larner demands a free hand in reorganizing the whole plant, or he'll quit. He wants to get rid of pretty nearly everybody; he wants to change the fixed policy of selling to the jewellery trade and go after department-store business instead; he wants—oh, I don't know what he doesn't want. It doesn't matter. I'm letting him quit."

Wilbur started. This was catastrophic. He got on beautifully with A. W. Larner. Working under a man who never

asked or accepted suggestions, who exacted only meticulous obedience, was precisely what suited Wilbur's tastes and abilities. A new chief would be quick to discover his defects —just as these had been detected in the other jobs he had held and lost.

He brightened slightly at the thought. In that case he would probably be fired, anyway. He was beginning to be tired of the routine which had engaged him, surprisingly, for two years. A change would be refreshing. Still, the thought of the Thurlow Clock Works without A. W. Larner was disquieting. He shook his head at it. Thurlow compressed his lips.

"Of course I could advertise for a new sales manager," he said. "But that means breaking in an outsider, and Larner's stirred up the force so that they're all going round with chips on their shoulders, looking for trouble. Or I could bring in one of the travellers. But if I do that I'll have to fill his place on the road, and the other men will be sore. I—what do you think, Haskett?"

He shot the question at Wilbur abruptly, in the fashion which always distressed him. Questions should be propounded, he felt, gradually, diplomatically, giving a fellow a chance to look them over before formulating an answer. He shook his head, as if thinking deeply. Instinct served him well. You could always sidestep these formidable issues, leave them to somebody else who liked volunteering opinions.

"Why, if I were you, sir——" Wilbur liked the disclaimer involved in the supposition. Somehow it seemed always to remove him a little farther from the position of responsibility for what he said. "If I were you," he repeated, for emphasis as well as time, "I'd ask the travellers about it, and the other department-heads, too." He brightened. "You see, if they suggest some course it—it makes them responsible for it. They can't very well complain if you do what they want——"

Thurlow looked pleased. "That's exactly what I have

done," he said. "Only I hadn't reasoned it out like that. And they all agree, for once."

Wilbur breathed more easily. He'd avoided that one very well. He prepared himself for the next pitfall. But Thurlow had no more questions. He recovered a measure of his normal assurance, his brief display of indecision abruptly ended.

"I've put it up to them and they've agreed on what they want. So, rather against my own judgment, I'm going to let 'em have their way. I'm going to make you sales manager, Haskett, and give you a free hand as far as I can. You know the business, you know the men, you know the problems we're up against. Go ahead and show what you can do."

He offered his hand with some formality. Mechanically Wilbur sealed the compact with his own his mind flattened under the shock.

Sales manager! Wilbur Haskett enthroned in the mighty place of A. W. Larner, confronted by the array of momentous decisions which Larner had made so magnificently unaided. Wilbur Haskett, obliged to decide not only his own problems, but those of a terrifying number of other men—Wilbur Haskett, whose instinct was to evade even a trivial issue, to lean on the discretion of stronger minds and clearer wills, deprived of even an advisory superior!

"It's a big chance—and a big job," he heard Thurlow saying. "It needs brains, which I think you've got, and diplomacy, which I know you've got, but most of all it needs backbone—initiative. And whether you've got them we'll have to find out."

Refusal, excuse, rose to Wilbur's lips. Better tell him now and get it over with. It would save a lot of trouble. But as always he shrank from any final step. Perhaps it would be wiser to wait and ask advice—talk it over with his father, anyway. Yes, it wouldn't do any harm to let Thurlow wait for a decision——

"I don't expect you to be prepared with ideas right now, of course. You weren't expecting this any more than I was, and it probably startles you——"

"Yes, sir," gasped Wilbur. "It takes me right off my feet."

Plainly this pleased the president. It showed a proper spirit of modesty and appreciation. He looked more benevolent.

"That's right. Think it over for a day or two. Larner isn't leaving till next week, and you and he will have a good deal of detail to arrange between you. If you need an assistant——"

"I will." Wilbur was in no doubt whatever about this. "There's too much work for one man."

"Yes. Larner says so, too. He suggested that we might move up Miss Carston and get a new stenographer to take her place."

Wilbur snatched hopefully at the idea. Miss Carston was a very militant lady indeed. He visualized her firm chin with a sense of refuge.

"All right, then. You'd better talk to her yourself. Give you a better standing with her if she deals with you. She'll want a raise of course. Keep it down as low as you can. And about yourself—you'll be wanting something in that line, too. How much?"

Wilbur spread his hands. "I——I'll leave that to you, sir. Whatever you say——"

He saw that Thurlow was pleased at this attitude, and he felt a stab of self-reproach for his weakness. If he'd spoken up boldly he might have got as much as twenty-five a week. Now, of course——"

"Well, I want to be fair. You're an experiment, of course, and I'm not going to give you what we've been paying Larner, but—call it thirty-five, for the present. If you make good, we'll do the fair thing."

"Y-Yes, sir. Thanks." Wilbur made his escape, puzzled. By all the laws of nature he should have suffered for his be-

setting sin of passing the buck. Evading responsibility had cost him one job after another. Here, apparently, it had earned him promotion and fixed his pay higher, by ten dollars a week, than downrightness could have achieved.

To be sure it wouldn't—couldn't last long. He saw that under A. W. Larner's dominating personality there had been neither need nor room for self-assertion on the part of Wilbur Haskett. Now, deprived of that overshadowing superior, standing revealed in his own colours, he would certainly be found out and discharged in a few weeks. As he went back to his desk he contemplated the future in a divided mood. It was almost his usual state of mind, this balanced hesitation between alternatives.

On the one side, the dignity and honours and emoluments of the new position, a rise from the obscurity and servitude of a clerkship, a partial rehabilitation in the estimate of the people at home; on the other, the appalling prospect of responsibility, the demand for instant decisions, the need, as Thurlow had put it of initiative.

Wilbur detested the word. It had come to represent a meaning far broader than Noah Webster would have countenanced. It stood for an entire philosophy against which all of Wilbur Haskett's impulses and instincts rebelled. Initiative involved a habit of conceiving original thoughts, plus the more abhorrent processes of weighing them, reforming them, passing judgment on them. People with initiative actually enjoyed thinking up things to do. Nor did they pause there—forthwith they made up their minds to do these things. Sometimes, under peculiar circumstances, Wilbur envied such people, but below that envy was a secret pity —making trouble for themselves, inviting mental stresses and physical labours perfectly avoidable by mere abstinence from effort. These strains, too, must be endured by others. When they involved Wilbur in their widening ripples of consequence he stopped envying and pitying, and gave himself singly to resentment.

And now he was either to serve this hungry deity himself or forfeit his unexpected honours. Either prospect was depressing. He listened absently to congratulations from A. W. Larner, suddenly less august and formidable, from old McIlhenny of the Costs Department, and Torbitt, who came over from his credit-files to shake him by the hand. They didn't know his secret forebodings, to be sure, but somehow their speech comforted him. If they were all so certain that it was a matter for congratulations, perhaps it might turn out that way, after all.

Wilbur Haskett thought unpleasantly of initiative, but the referendum exactly suited his tastes.

II

"You've evidently turned over a new leaf. That's very good. But it's just as easy to blot one page of a ledger as another, Wilbur. The thing you've got to do is to keep this leaf straight and clean."

Martin Haskett directed toward his son an eye in which approval and admonition were nicely balanced—the eye with which he was accustomed to regard successful applicants for loans. It was, therefore, a radically different eye from that which gleamed sternly on rejected applications, and yet more unlike that which beamed on borrowers of whose credit there could be no doubt. Wilbur was accurately aware of its divided quality, now. He wriggled slightly under it.

"Yes, sir."

"This is, after all, nothing but a blank page, on which you've got to write success or failure." Martin Haskett clung to the familiar idiom of his calling. "You've spoiled a good many of them Wilbur."

"Yes, sir." Wilbur wriggled again.

"And you know why. We both know." Mr. Haskett paused to dissect the steak, his lips pursed. "It's because you—you

persist in—in——" He scowled as he groped for the word. Dora, whose reverence for her father was perceptibly less than Wilbur's, supplied it.

"In passing the buck," she suggested. Martin Haskett compromised between a frown and a grin. Dora's laxity in the matter of English tormented his precise ear, but her gift of hitting squarely on the head of the nail delighted his passion for accuracy.

"To use an abominable slang phrase, yes." He nodded. "You've evaded responsibility consistently, all your life. You've formed a habit of letting other people make your decisions in big things and little ones alike. It's a dangerous weakness, Wilbur, and you've paid pretty heavily for encouraging it."

"Yes, sir." Wilbur devoted himself to the steak.

"Evidently you've made some progress toward overcoming it," continued his father, "or you wouldn't have won this promotion. But if you show the slightest tendency to go back to it, now, you'll find that it will make trouble for you quicker than ever."

"Yes, sir."

"The measure of a man's success—any man's—is his ability to make up his mind. If I'd followed your system I'd still be a bookkeeper instead of a cashier."

"Yes, sir." Wilbur meditated. This promised to continue all the way to dessert. He wished that he had waited till after dinner to explode his news.

"You've got to think for yourself. You've got to stand on your own feet, fight your own battles, make your own pace."

The words jarred on Wilbur's ear. He hated thinking. He hated standing. He hated even the thought of fighting. All his instincts bade him drift agreeably with whatever current was strong enough to carry him. Looking forward to a lifetime of struggle and rivalry, he thought, wistfully, of the times that were gone.

It cheered him to hear his father's continuation. If Wilbur relapsed into his old evil ways, prophesied Martin Haskett, he would certainly find himself back in his dishonourable servitude. There was always that avenue of release, thought Wilbur. It had its defects, to be sure, but the idea of it comforted him, nevertheless like the consciousness of a postern gate of escape with a siege in prospect. He wasn't absolutely condemned to initiative and responsibility for life. It was never too late he reflected, to be fired.

The lecture was resumed in the living-room. He grew more and more uncomfortable under it, casting about for an excuse for flight. This presented, at once, the ordeal of making up his mind. He could go to a movie for one thing; he could slip over to the club for billiards; he could visit some congenial young woman. Each of these courses presented attractions, between which he hesitated helplessly, inclining first to one and then another, while the paternal wisdom eddied and beat about him. Dora returning from the telephone solved the problem for him.

"Cynthia wants to talk to you, Wilbur." Her eyes danced with amiable malice. "I should think you'd call her up, sometimes, instead of letting her do it all. This makes three—no, four times—in one week."

Wilbur grinned. He liked Dora, in spite of her intrusions on his private affairs. Dora always had her mind made up in advance, a person of distinct and forceful opinions, and therefore exceedingly useful as an oracle to her elder brother. It simplified things to ask Dora which necktie suited him best, for instance. She always seemed to know.

Cynthia Graydon's voice came over the wire with a pleasing definitude. She had a trick of crisp, staccato speech which Wilbur found restful. He liked her, in acquiescent fashion; it was easier to like Cynthia than not to, especially if she wanted to be liked. Also, his friendship with her improved his position in the household, particularly with his mother, to whom the social phase of the affair was mollifying. For

that matter Martin Haskett himself manifestly approved of his son's acquaintance with the daughter of George Graydon. A cashier, after all is a cashier, and bank-presidents are undeniably bank-presidents.

"Come on over, Wilbur."

"All right—if you want me to." Wilbur accepted the decision of the fates and Cynthia concerning the disposition of his evening. It occurred to him now that he much preferred to spend it with her, instead of watching the movies or playing cowboy with Lonnie Dexter at the club. He departed with a stubborn conviction that, whatever Martin Haskett said to the contrary, the habit of passing the buck yielded excellent results under certain conditions. If he had determined to go to the club, for instance, he would have missed an evening with Cynthia.

His mood, as he found her waiting for him on the wide verandah at the side of the big, friendly house, was even more favourably inclined than usual toward her. She had extricated him from an indefinite lecture on an unpleasant theme. He discovered, in spite of a waning twilight, that she was nicer to look at than he had previously thought.

"We're going down the Shore Walk," she informed him. "Come on."

"All right." His approval deepened. Some girls would have asked him what he wanted to do, would have concealed their own preferences cunningly. Cynthia saved a fellow the nuisance of making up his mind.

He liked the way she walked, too, he decided. She brought her feet down with a sort of emphasis, so that the sound of them on the concrete was distinct, positive. He found himself telling her of his promotion. Her instant and obvious pleasure both charmed and alarmed him. It hadn't occurred to him, till now, to consider his place at the clock works as in any way connected with Cynthia's opinion of him. Now he saw quite plainly that there was a relation. She was gratified in a degree which mere courtesy did not explain.

"I always knew you'd get on," she declared. "It used to make me so angry when——" she stopped. "I mean that I've always seen your possibilities. This is just a beginning, of course, but——"

"Yes. That's so." He retreated before the advance of a forbidding reflection that there were higher and more exigent positions than that of sales manager at the clock works. At the same time he became aware that Cynthia regarded such eminences as desirable.

"You'll go right on up," she stated. "I'm sure of it."

"Are you?" He scowled at the idea of giddier heights before him.

"Positive." She nodded. "But you'll have to work like everything. You will, though, won't you?"

"I—I suppose so." He scuffed his soles.

"It'll be interesting. Father says—I didn't mean to say that. I'm not supposed to repeat things he talks about at home, but it won't matter, with you. He says the clock works are slipping down hill fast and that if they don't get some brainy men in charge pretty soon there'll be real trouble."

Wilbur nodded. He had absorbed this information easily enough during his apprenticeship under A. W. Larner. But it did not suggest itself as an added inducement.

"It'll be all the more credit for you to put the factory back on its feet," she continued. "I should think you'd be thrilled!"

"I wish I had a chance like that for myself," she exclaimed. "It's such a tiresome thing to be a girl and forbidden to do anything interesting——"

Wilbur saw light. "If you feel like that," he said, more quickly than usual for him, "maybe you'd let me talk things over with you, sometimes. It—it helps to get an inside view, you know——"

"I'd adore it! Promise?"

"You bet." He was appreciably relieved. Here, at least, was one source of decision. And it would provide him, he

foresaw, with an adequate reason for coming to see Cynthia, an automatic answer to such self-questionings as had tormented him tonight. Between the club and the movies and Cynthia he would, henceforward, find it appreciably easier to decide.

III

A general, inclusive distaste for his new estate became specific as he contemplated the task of dealing with Miss Carston.

The most impressive quality of A. W. Larner's adequacy had been his complete dominance of this woman. Wilbur, even in the days of his agreeable insignificance, had been uneasy in her presence, had painfully avoided a pretence of authority. When obliged to dictate to her speeding, contemptuous pencil he had taken care to give the process the aspect of an amiable collaboration on Miss Carston's part, asking her advice as to words and phrases, thanking her when the finished work lay on his desk. Sometimes, watching her under the direction of A. W. Larner's crisp commands, he had detected the sardonic unconsent registered in her compressed lip and secretly revered her untamed spirit. Now, elevated to authority above her, he must issue orders even as Larner had issued them, impose his will on this personage who had barely yielded to the extraordinary assertiveness of the late sales manager.

Wilbur recoiled from the prospect of even the relatively facile affair of raising her wages. But the thing, indubitably, had to be done. He summoned her, controlling a fluttering incertitude of voice.

"Miss Carston, I've decided——" He caught a gleam in her direct eye which checked him on the threshold of this attempted bravado. "Mr. Thurlow agrees with me," he amended, hurriedly, "that you can handle my old job better than some outsider."

"I could." Miss Carston's entire assurance relieved him. He nodded.

"If you're quite sure of it, you may take hold right away." It occurred to him that having her at his elbow would provide a trustworthy fountain of decision, to be tapped at will. He took heart again. It might be practicable to reverse the positions in fact if not in name. Instead of being obliged to order Miss Carston about he could use her as a prop and brace for his own conclusions. Surveying her unrelenting grimness he felt that here was a willing candidate for the passed buck. He brightened.

"It will be necessary to take on somebody in your old place. I—er—I think you're much better qualified to pass on stenographic ability than I am. Suppose you look after that matter?"

Again her resolute eye gleamed, but he was conscious of a difference. There was an effect of warmth in the flash, this time, a glow rather than a glitter.

"Very well." Miss Carston made a hieroglyphic on her book. "Salary?"

"I leave that to you," he said hastily. "I—I——" a path opened suddenly before him. "I believe in delegating as much authority as possible, Miss Carston. Without criticizing Mr. Larner's policy, it seems to me that he burdened himself with a great deal of unnecessary detail. I'm giving you practically a free hand, and I expect you to use it."

There was no doubt about the glow, this time. For the first time in their acquaintance he saw Miss Carston display symptoms of an imminent thaw. He was again inspired.

"About your own—er—salary. This new position naturally deserves better pay. But Mr. Thurlow's anxious to keep expenses down as far as possible, and of course it's to our advantage to have our departmental overhead as low as we can make it. I'm going to ask you to fix your own pay, therefore. Hereafter, you see, we're going to—to think of this plant and this department as if we owned them."

"That's perfectly splendid!" Miss Carston's prominent chin perceptibly diminished its aggressiveness. "I'd like to say, once for all, that this policy will show results, Mr. Haskett. And I'll prove it. I can get a competent stenographer for twelve dollars—I know just the girl I want. You'd have had to pay her fifteen, anyway, but I've talked it over with her and she'll take twelve, if I deal with her. And for myself, I'll be satisfied with twenty. If it had been just a case of doing more work with no authority I'd have stood out for twenty-five. But the way you put it——"

"That's fine—fine!" Wilbur breathed deep. One of the abiding terrors of the new job receded rapidly into distant dimness. Of course he would eventually get himself into trouble by such expedients; successful men, like A. W. Larner and Martin Haskett and George Graydon, were those who shouldered responsibilities with an eager greed. Failures, like Wilbur, shuffled out from under. In the end he would be discovered, condemned, flung out, as he deserved.

He looked forward to this event with something like hope. It was all very well to be in receipt of an enlarged wage, to enjoy a position of dignity in the sight of others, to be congratulated and respected and even envied, but the game, he perceived, was worth less than the candle.

A fellow lived only once. To spend that spangle of existence in acute discomfort, for the mere money's sake, was demonstrably the bargain of a fool. In spite of the ease with which he had contrived to evade the issue in Miss Carston's case, he was oppressed by a sense of isolation amid yammering problems which he and no one else must solve. And this condition would grow worse rather than better as time marched. The longer he clung to his unhappy eminence the harder it would be to endure it. The sooner he was unmasked and overthrown, the better. There would always be jobs—comfortable, friendly jobs, placing no strain on a man's soul and yet yielding a living. Hampton wasn't the world. He could emigrate. . . .

He yearned for the day of his downfall. He even meditated going frankly to Thomas Thurlow and declaring his unfitness, but he drew back from a step so decisive. If he resigned it would be unquestionably his own deed, his own fault. There would be no excuse to advance at home. Better leave it to Thurlow. It wouldn't be long, at the worst and best of it.

Nevertheless, after his first few days, the sense of standing alone became unendurable. After delegating to Miss Carston so much of his proper work that only a trifling residue lay in his hands, he was still bent and suffocated under the weight of it.

Every day there were a dozen minor issues to be decided; he must tell Dugan whether to take the side trip to Kansas City or stay on his appointed route; he must answer Shelby's wired interrogation as to letting Bleistein and Levy return for full credit certain items of old stock alleged to be unsalable; he must advise Fraser as to the policy of giving the Ellsworth Company jobbers' prices. Every mail beset him with a multiplicity of such stresses.

And Thomas Thurlow, appeased by the results of his dealings with Miss Carston, was beginning to be inquisitive again, to ask for suggestions, for "constructive ideas!"

He groped, under such a demand, for his favourite device of evasion, longing for the strength of character to resign at once and have done with it all, but aware that the thing was utterly beyond him.

"I'll be frank, Haskett. We've got to do something. We've been slipping down hill steadily." Thurlow's face exhibited a weariness which Wilbur could understand, now. His self-pity forsook him, for the moment, as he realized how much heavier a burden of responsibility and concern bore down on Thurlow's old shoulders. It was bad enough to be a mere sales manager, he had discovered. How much worse to stand where Thurlow stood! And yet there were people—his father, Cynthia—who believed that it was better to be Thomas Thur-

low than Wilbur Haskett, that Wilbur himself was better off than he had been two weeks ago!

"It's all up to the sales end, Haskett. We can make the goods as well as ever, but we can't sell—that's the long and short of it. It's costing us more to get a dollar's worth of business; we aren't running to full capacity, either, and that sends up the overhead. I counted on Larner to find a way out for us but he was hopeless. We can't destroy our whole business structure and begin over again. We've got to find what's wrong with the concern as it stands, and dig up a way to correct it."

"Yes, sir." Wilbur spoke gravely. "That's my idea, exactly."

Under cover of the speech he fumbled in his mental darkness for something which would sidestep the issue thus put squarely up to him. It was instinct only which actuated this process, not a conscious desire to hide his incompetency and cling to his new job. The easy path out of every difficulty was to pass the buck. Usually he accomplished this quite easily, but today inspiration eluded him.

"I've had my eye on you, since you took hold," continued Thurlow. "I like the way you've gone at it—you've got rid of practically all the routine and detail. That was one trouble with Larner—he couldn't let go of anything. He wanted to have his finger in every little trifle. You seem to have the gift of making other people do things for themselves. It's a big part of executive ability, that."

"Yes, sir." Wilbur nearly grinned. If Thomas Thurlow remotely guessed the real reason why he had transferred seven tenths of his work to Miss Carston's willing hands, he wouldn't call it executive ability! Hardly!

"That leaves you free to centre your mind on constructive work. You've begun well. But I'm worried. We can't go on like this. We've got to hammer out a new selling policy that will keep the plant busy—and I'm hoping that you'll see

something practical in that line mighty soon, Haskett. It's entirely up to you——"

Pure instinct prompted Wilbur's instant disclaimer. It was not in his nature to accept such a statement without challenge.

"I don't see that, sir. It seems to me that it's up to the whole organization. The sales department's only one branch of the business. We can't sell unless we get the right lines of goods; we can't sell them even then unless they're priced right, nor unless we get efficient co-operation from the credit department. Sales policy depends on all those things. I think" —he saw a fresh egress opening before him—"I think that was Mr. Larner's big difficulty. He tried to formulate his own schemes without consulting the other departments——"

"That's true enough. He stirred up a hornets' nest every morning. I hadn't thought of it in just that light, though. Then you think——"

"I think that selling's up to the whole organization, sir. I think they all ought to be consulted about it—invited to suggest things——"

Thurlow slapped his thigh. "I've got it! What we need here is a sort of conference scheme—have all the department heads meet every day for a talk over their troubles, exchange and discuss ideas, shake together into a united body! I ought to have started it long ago. You're perfectly right—everybody in the plant has a certain share of selling to do and ought to have a voice in the selection of selling methods. I'll get them together right after lunch. That's a first-rate idea, Haskett——"

"Oh, it's your idea, sir. I only told you what was wrong. You thought of the remedy."

Wilbur spoke quickly. Thurlow wasn't going to fix responsibility for the innovation on him! He'd make it clear from the first that the scheme was none of his. The president chuckled.

"Well, maybe I did. We won't quarrel over the glory till we see how it works. But I think it will."

Wilbur escaped, immensely relieved. With a regular daily conference to consult, he could shift most of his depressing burdens to the joint strength of the organization.

He foresaw that he would be gladly relieved of the worst job of all—inventing, originating. Larner's friction with McIlhenny and Torbitt and the others had arisen less from his intrusions on their respective provinces than from his impatient rejection of their attempts to intrude on his. McIlhenny was convinced that he knew more about selling than he did about costs; Torbitt maintained that only a man trained in the science of passing on credits could possibly understand the true art of salesmanship.

These two would be fertile sources of originality. There would be no need for Wilbur Haskett to invent. And the conference would also spare him the need of rejecting impossible schemes. He could rely on Thomas Thurlow and the rest to act as balance wheels on excessive enthusiasm.

Suddenly it came to him that by merely centering his intelligence and energy on such evasions, he could not only minimize the unpleasant features of his new importance, but continue undisturbed in its profits for a considerable period. Of course, in the end, they would find him out, but in the meantime he would enjoy his increased pay, his improved status in men's sight, with relatively little of the detested business of deciding things for himself.

The idea burned happily in him. For once, it seemed, his advantage marched hand in hand with his inclination. He set himself behind a desk cleared of its litter of trivialties magnificently transferred to Miss Carston's gratified capability, to devise new means of passing the buck so deftly as to deceive the clumsy eye.

For the first time in his experience business presented the aspect of amusement. It was going to be something like a

game, he thought—a game which he was predestined to lose, in the end, but in the playing of which there was immediate profit and pleasure.

From the outset the conference justified its creators. Wilbur, skulking as unobtrusively as possible in a background of attentive silence, contrived to put his own problems to vote in such fashion as to acquit him of even a deliberative part in their solution. And by abstaining from taking sides, he discovered an increasing popularity in which there was a perceptible tinge of respect. As if in return for his reverential acceptance of Torbitt's views on selling, he was invited to express opinions on certain nice questions of credit, and these, when adopted, became Torbitt's responsibilities, not Wilbur's.

"If I were you——" The phrase fitted pleasantly on his lips and left him cheerfully free of any share of answerability for what followed. He *wasn't* Torbitt. What he might or might not have done in the event of an exchange of identities with the credit manager was purely in the field of speculation. He was conscious of an increasing security.

Also, even a less percipient eye than his would have observed an improvement in the affairs of the Thurlow Clock Works. The effect of the conferences was swiftly manifest in a smoother co-ordination between departments. Even Werfer, the thin-skinned Swiss who ruled the factory and who could overawe Thurlow himself by exploding in an effervescent fury when outsiders meddled with his preserves, yielded to the weight of a majority opinion against him. Under pressure he consented to the discontinuance of some of his petted models on which there had ceased to be a visible profit. Under duress he withdrew his opposition to some of the novelties for which the road-men pleaded in every letter.

"We're shaking together," said Thurlow. He looked younger, Wilbur thought. Twice, lately, he had taken an afternoon for golf. He dropped a hand on Wilbur's shoulder.

"You've begun well, son. That conference idea was just what we needed."

Wilbur said nothing. It wasn't necessary to shift the fatherhood of the conference, now. It stood too firmly to offer any possibilities of reproach.

"But you've only begun." Wilbur frowned at the wall. More trouble! "This new spirit is a good thing, but it won't save us. We've got to find something better yet. The other fellows keep right on cutting in. We're losing ground steadily. I'm counting on you to find the way to get it back, Haskett."

Wilbur shrugged. Worse and worse. For a moment he wished that he had refused the promotion at the beginning. No sooner did he get himself safely past one ordeal of decision than another was thrust upon him.

"I'm too close to it, myself," said Thurlow. "I'm near-sighted, so to speak. I didn't see that conference idea, obvious as it was, till you suggested it. Now you——"

Wilbur saw light. Just as Mr. Thurlow sought to shift the burden to him, so could he pass it on with the same excuse.

"We're all near-sighted, sir. What we need is an outside view altogether. Why not get it? Put the whole thing up to somebody who isn't so close to our everyday problems?"

Thurlow reflected. "It might help. But who?"

Wilbur meditated. "Get some good advertising agency to come up and look things over. They ought to have a sort of bird's-eye view, oughtn't they?"

Thurlow stiffened at the word. He detested the whole scheme of publicity, root and branch. A proper self-respect, he maintained, forbade a man from flaunting his name and wares in the public eye, like a wayside hawker. "I'm a manufacturer, not a huckster," he was fond of informing the occasional solicitors who reached his presence.

"Out of the question," he snapped. "When I get down to that level I'll put up the shutters——"

"I didn't mean to recommend advertising itself," said Wilbur hastily. "I thought—there are plenty of agencies who are more like sales-experts than advertisers. We could hire one of 'em to go over our lay-out and see if there's anything we can do. It looks sensible to me. They see the inside of dozens of businesses. We only know one."

"There's something in that," said the president, thoughtfully. "Yes. It might help. We'll try it, anyway. I'll write—no, you do it——"

"Excuse me, sir. But we'll get better service if they feel, from the first that they're dealing with the man at the top."

Wilbur ducked and sidestepped without a conscious effort, now. He was perfecting his technique with every added day's experience.

"That's true, too." Thurlow nodded. "You've got a level head, Haskett. And a pretty hard one, too."

Wilbur accepted the tribute modestly. You could certainly get away with it, he informed himself. If you were sufficiently quick about it, the very people to whom you passed the buck would regard it as a favour, a new proof of your sagacity.

His experience with the amazingly alert gentleman who presently appeared in behalf of the Marny Agency confirmed this conviction. Mr. Gerrish clearly enjoyed the process of receiving bucks from people who didn't care for them.

"It's refreshing to find a sales manager who doesn't know it all and then some," he confided to Wilbur, over an intimate lunch-table. "You don't act as if I were up here to put skids under you. You give a fellow a free hand."

"Go as far as you like," said Wilbur cordially. "The blue sky is your limit, for all me."

Thus, when Mr. Gerrish read his typewritten findings to the assembled conference, Wilbur was constrained to blush and wriggle under sundry references to himself and his conduct of his department which were as patently sincere as they were undeserved. The gist of the report was simple.

"You've got a first-class line of goods at fair prices. Your

credit policy is liberal and sound; you have a satisfactory system of buying, and your cost figures are accurate. Your factory is highly efficient, your labour well-treated and contented. I see only one serious defect. You lack anything in the nature of a leader—a specialty which can carry the rest of your line on its back."

Gerrish paused and ran an eye impressively around the group. There were nods of assent. Wilbur reserved judgment. He saw no reason in premature self-committal, and he was, as usual, quite undecided in which direction to commit himself.

"Every one of your competitors has one or several specialties which they use as entering wedges. The Northern, for instance——"

They listened to a familiar catalogue, nodding.

"My conclusion is that you can follow this example successfully. I am not a clock man, and my agency has had no close experience in that branch of business, so that I do not venture a suggestion as to the nature of the leader which you might select. That is for you to discover, out of your greater and closer knowledge of your field."

Wilbur concealed a grin. Mr. Gerrish, he perceived, had learned a little of his system. This was passing the buck straight back whence it had started. But he observed that those who received it were artlessly unaware of the fact. Gerrish wound up his address with a diplomatic reference to advertising. If the Thurlow Clock Works evolved a suitable specialty, susceptible of profiting from conservative, rational publicity, he and his agency would be happy to go into that question.

He departed in an atmosphere of reluctant approval. Not for nothing had Mr. Gerrish ascertained the prejudices of Thomas Thurlow before beginning his investigations. His careful abstinence from solicitation placed him well up in that gentleman's regard.

The conference, in executive session, confirmed the Gerrish

report. The Thurlow Works needed a leader. It remained to fix upon one. Here opinions divagated. There were several tart exchanges between Messrs. Torbitt and Werfer; Thurlow, pouring oil on rising waters, turned to Wilbur.

"Let's hear from the sales department, please."

Wilbur wagged his head. "I'm not ready to talk, yet." He spoke impressively, as one who shelters a mighty secret. "I don't believe in jumping at an idea. We can't afford to guess wrong about this."

Even Torbitt admitted the force of this observation.

"I don't like guessing, anyway," pursued Wilbur carefully. "And that's what it amounts to—sitting here and choosing a leader. None of us really knows how any clock may affect the public." He felt firmer ground below him. "Before I suggest anything I'm going to test it out—on the people who'd actually buy or refuse to buy the goods. That's slower, but it's a lot safer."

"Perfectly right," said Thomas Thurlow. "We'll adjourn this meeting. Same time tomorrow." He glanced at Wilbur. "Be ready then?"

"I may," said Wilbur cautiously. He went out regretting his course. He'd let himself in for it, now. When he appeared tomorrow, empty-handed, they'd see through his shams. Well, it didn't matter very much. A job where a fellow had to be straining his mind with weighty decisions all the time wasn't the place for Wilbur Haskett, anyway.

IV

"Let me think," said Cynthia, superfluously. Wilbur was patently willing to countenance the process. She drew her distinct eyebrows together. "You don't want to imitate other people, of course. You want something distinctive and different and new."

"Yes." Wilbur nodded gravely. Shifting his immediate

problem to Cynthia's acquiescent mind relieved him briefly of its burden, but he was not sanguine of results.

"And yet it mustn't be freakish," she pursued. "You want something with a real value—something that lots of people will want and keep on wanting. Let me think."

She thought, visibly, for several seconds. Watching her, Wilbur once more revised his opinions of her appearance. She was getting better looking every day, he thought.

"Anything in the way of a fancy clock wouldn't do, then," she argued. "Tastes vary too much. What you want is something that almost everybody could use—like an alarm clock, for instance."

"Everybody makes them," he objected. "That's the most crowded field in the business."

"Yes." She nodded. "I see that." Another interval of meditation. "But—but they're all so—so obvious. Even the nice-looking ones are just alarm-clocks—you can tell the minute you look at them what they're for——

"Yes." He smiled tolerantly. A woman's objection! Why shouldn't an alarm-clock reveal itself honestly for what it was? After all, it was a utilitarian affair—not a decoration——

She clapped her hands sharply. "I've got it! I've got it, Wilbur!" She sprang up, vanished. He heard her feet on the stair. Returning she showed him a little bureau-clock, finished in imitation ivory and ornamented with her monogram. The Thurlow plant turned out thousands like it, every year.

"Why couldn't you make a clock like this with an alarm in it? Then a girl who likes pretty things on her bureau could use it to wake up by. I——"

"Alarm clocks are built for men," he objected. "And men don't care for pretty little dew dabs——"

"Yes. But women do. And women have to wake up, just as often and just as early as men." She nodded emphasis. "Married women have to wake up earlier," she enlarged, with

a touch of filial partisanship. Wilbur had an enlightening vision of the impressive George Graydon, undergoing the process of awakening at the instance of Cynthia's even more impressive mother. "And I read somewhere that there are more than five million self-supporting women in the country —they need alarm-clocks just as much as men, and most of them would rather have a—a woman's kind of clock. Why don't you try catering to that field, instead of following in other people's footprints?"

Wilbur was impressed. "It looks possible," he conceded. "I—I'll take it up with the rest of 'em, anyway."

He listened absently to her eager amplifications of the idea, his doubts lessening. There was something in it. He knew that the mechanical problem could be solved, easily enough. The Thurlow Works already made clocks no larger than Cynthia's with alarm-trains compactly stowed in them. They made clocks with much the same style of case and design. Yes, it would be worth while offering the suggestion, anyway.

He followed his natural bent, next morning, by a canny preparation of the way for his suggestion. He visited the other departments one by one, broaching Cynthia's idea diplomatically, so that his auditor must be dull indeed if he did not anticipate the climax of the proposal. Torbitt and McIlhenny and even Werfer himself were each convinced when Wilbur departed, that they had helped to originate his scheme. In the conference, therefore, it appeared as the joint invention, opposition stifled in advance.

Wilbur, concealing his own intermediacy as far as possible, breathed easily as it was agreed that the factory should make up some samples, that costs and profits might be determined and a selling-price fixed on the basis of these, that the salesmen be consulted when the models were already on exhibition. Thomas Thurlow stopped Wilbur in the corridor.

"That was clever, son, mighty clever. I didn't think you had it in you. Good work!"

Wilbur wriggled uneasily, affected innocence.

"Oh, you can't fool me. I know it was all your notion. None of those fellows is capable of getting an idea like that. But I didn't mean the idea itself. I meant the way you sold 'em on it beforehand—I spotted you, this morning, making your rounds. You let each of 'em think he thought of it first. That's real brains, Haskett. Most men would have wanted all the credit, and we'd have spent the afternoon answering objections. You're a diplomat. That was great—great!"

Wilbur went back to his desk, grinning. He would have preferred to avoid the credit but since it was inevitable, he was entertained by the comedy of Mr. Thurlow's misconstruction. Actually he was being praised for sidestepping the detested initiative, slipping from under his just responsibilities! It was funny. But the crisis had been once more deferred. It was like a game, more than ever. He almost enjoyed playing it.

It was easy enough to keep in the background of later developments. The salesmen unitedly welcomed the new clock. The office and factory approved of it no less cordially. There remained only the trade and the public to be persuaded. Wilbur mechanically prepared his own plans for this, without any deep confidence. The little lady alarm-clocks had lifted him safely past a threatening situation, but he hardly hoped that they would accomplish much more. Presently he would face issues which no amount of shiftiness could evade. Then his pretensions would be perceived and the just penalty exacted of him. He was still willing that this should happen, although a growing fondness for the material aspects of his estate had had the effect of weakening his distaste for its demands and obligations.

His forebodings were partly justified. The salesmen reported a puzzling lack of progress. The trade preferred to hold back from new things, they said, subjoining scornful comment on this conservatism in token of their own fearlessly progressive spirits. A few small orders sifted across

Wilbur's desk, lost in the adverse reports. He waited, resigned to disaster, but no longer actually hoping for it.

It was pleasant to have a little more money than he needed, to wear better clothes, to indulge more liberally in the amusements which attracted him. He felt that he would regret this prosperity when he reverted to the penury of his other days. Still, it couldn't be helped. He sensed the sword of Damocles above his neck. A mere question of time. He had passed his buck as far as it would go.

"They all say it needs advertising," wrote Walden, from Chicago. "Won't touch it unless we sell it for them—the boobs!"

Thomas Thurlow, looking older and more worried than ever, read the report, sitting beside Wilbur's desk. He shook his head.

"I suppose they're right. Times have changed, Haskett. A man has to bang a drum, nowadays, or nobody pays any attention to him. I'd advertise, fast enough, if I could."

Wilbur lifted interrogating brows. What prevented Thomas Thurlow from following his own desires?

"The fact is we can't afford it. I—I had a talk with your father and Graydon, today. I'd made up my mind to risk a campaign if they'd let me have the money. But they won't. I don't blame them. They've carried a pretty heavy line for us, and the statement looks worse every time I have to show it."

Wilbur clicked sympathetically. This was the sort of thing he might expect, if he kept on climbing! Suppose he reached the dizzy level of president, some day? It would only mean looking and feeling as Thomas Thurlow did. He shook his head. Not for Wilbur Haskett. Better obscurity, with an easy mind, than to sit in the seats of the mighty.

"If we could get a few orders, without advertising, or advertise without waiting for orders," continued Thurlow, "I honestly believe we'd pull out of the woods. This new clock is a winner. It's an untouched field—millions and millions of

women just waiting to be told about it. But we can't sell the clocks without advertising; we can't advertise without money; we can't raise the money unless we can sell the clocks."

Mechanically Wilbur passed the buck. "Let's send for Gerrish. Maybe he can think of something."

Gerrish came, listened, sympathized. "What you want is something to show your bank," he declared. "They can't visualize. We'll work out some good copy and designs and a sound plan of attack, and then put it up to them again."

Duly the results appeared—beautiful advertisements which overbore even the lingering prejudices of Thomas Thurlow. They were dignified, without being tame, convincing without blatancy, insidious in their appeal to eye and reason alike. Wilbur, against his wish, accompanied Thurlow and Gerrish to the bank.

His father was non-committal. Graydon, jingling keys in a trouser-pocket, regarded the designs and listened to the projected attack in a mood obviously divided.

"I'd like to do it, Tom," he said, at length. "This all looks good—fine. But you know I'm not loaning my own money. I can't take chances. And we're carrying you now for—well, I don't dare increase your line, and that's the long and short of it."

He jingled the keys again. "Why don't you put it up to the trade, instead of me? Take those ads. out and let your customers see 'em. Tell 'em you'll agree to run the advertising if they'll give you orders conditioned on your doing it. Then bring us the orders and we'll put up the money, fast enough."

Wilbur, carefully fixing his eyes on the wall, struggled against a grin. Even George Graydon wasn't above slipping out from under troublesome decisions! As an expert in the art and science of passing the buck, Wilbur paid tribute to the deftness with which the banker accomplished it here. But to Gerrish and Thurlow this seemed unrevealed.

"There's sense in that," conceded the agency man.

"Sounds so to me," said Thurlow. "We'll try it."

Wilbur repressed a chuckle. He caught his father's eye, fixed on him with an uncertain reluctant pride. His own relief at the new postponement of trouble was deepened as he realized that Martin Haskett was enjoying his son's apparent reform, was pleased and proud in his semblance of success. It almost made him wish that his father wasn't going to be disappointed, presently, when the truth was revealed. It laid upon him a new and vexing sense of obligation, of responsibility.

He took comfort in the reflection that his destiny now lay entirely in the hands of others. If the advertising was good, if the salesmen presented it effectively, if the trade manifested a becoming attitude of conviction—in any case it was no longer up to Wilbur Haskett himself.

Experiment proved discouraging. The salesmen, armed with advertising samples and data and conditional order-forms, reported an undiminished resistance.

"They all say they'll stock the new clock if we make a demand for it," was the refrain of the letters. "They won't touch it till they're sure, even on this conditional basis."

Wilbur was depressed without surprise. He accepted this state of affairs as predestined. But he foresaw the effect upon himself with a genuine displeasure. His father wouldn't look at him with that queer glimmer in his eyes, when he had lost this job. Cynthia wouldn't treat him with her new and exhilarating respect; he wouldn't have a comfortably filled pocket. And he felt, too, a growing compassion for Thomas Thurlow, as he observed the president's deepening evidences of discouragement. It must be a hard thing to watch a fine old business go to pot, and carry you down with it, when you're old.

There were times when Wilbur Haskett heartily wished that he were different—that he could do something better than just passing on the buck. But, as he drove his unwilling mind

toward the problem his old habit held him fast. It would be easier, safer, wiser, to put this thing up to somebody else.

On impulse he stopped in to talk to Wally Bleistein, a schoolmate now engaged in rejuvenating what had once been a thriving loan establishment, and had become, under Wally's management, a promising young jewellery business.

"What's wrong with you fellows, Wally? Why won't you string along with us and put this new clock across?"

Wally spread his hands in a persistent ancestral gesture.

"Why should I take a chance? I don't know it's a winner, do I? If it goes across I can easy buy what I want. If it don't, I don't have a case or two of stickers in my storeroom."

This was incontestable. Wilbur was silent.

"I let the other fellow do my gambling," confided Wally. "Me, I wait till I see where the cat jumps—every time."

Wilbur detected the familiar philosophy. It hadn't occurred to him that Wally, the successful, steel-skulled Wally Bleistein, was as given to evading issues as Wilbur Haskett himself.

"You pass the buck, eh?"

"You bet I do! Look at it sensible, Wilbur—I know some about this business but do I know it all? Not! I make mistakes. Every man makes 'em. But the whole trade don't. When the trade says a certain article is right, then it *is* right. One of us goes wrong, maybe, but ten thousand—uhmhumph!" He wagged a wise head.

Wilbur pondered this. "Then, if the rest of the trade signed these conditional orders of ours you'd feel safe, eh?"

Wally nodded. "Safe, yes. But still I wait. Why? Because there ain't any reason for me to put in an order till I see the demand. Why should I tie up? I could wait just as well as not——"

Wilbur saw the force of this. The trade, as typified by

Wally Bleístein, declined to receive the buck. That was all there was to it. (But Wally lowered his voice confidentially and leaned on his counter)

"Suppose, now, you make it worth my while to order ahead, that's something else again. You give me an inside figger, maybe. Then I sign up—*if* the rest say it's O. K. Otherwise not."

Wilbur surrounded this idea slowly. He walked back to the office, digesting it. Suppose they recast the prices to allow of a special, introductory discount, as a reward for those who signed up in advance? That would tempt in even the wary Bleistein. And, if Bleistein signed the order, his signature would serve to persuade somebody else . . . "one of us goes wrong, maybe, but not ten thousand!" Suppose—suppose—— He found himself running down the corridor toward Thurlow's office, the scheme suddenly full-fledged in his brain.

"You see, sir, they're all—all anxious to put it up to somebody else. Let's let 'em do it! We'll just change this order blank to read that it's conditioned on our selling say sixty per cent. of our trade—and selling a certain definite number of clocks. If we do that, we go ahead and advertise, and the orders are valid. If we don't we don't advertise, don't make the clocks, even, and it's all off. That lets every dealer pass the buck to every other one, see? And by offering a special price to those who sign up on that basis, we give 'em a reason for not waiting—we could call it a reward for helping us play absolutely safe. It'll work, Mr. Thurlow! I know it'll work! Everybody's a buckpasser, at heart! Look at us! We wear the same kind of clothes the other fellow wears—and he's wearing 'em because we do! We read the same books he does —*because* he does—go to the same shows, buy the same cars, build the same houses—all because we're buckpassers, because we're convinced that the other fellow knows more than we do! Why, when you think of it, every human institution is built on passing the buck—political parties, fashions, architecture—everything. Look at this very problem of ours:

we tried to pass it on to Gerrish; he passes it on to the trade and the trade passes it back to us. We put it up to the bank and they hand it along to the trade again! It goes round and round in a circle! But this scheme harnesses us up to it, instead of making us fight it. We encourage every customer to slip the buck to every other one. And they'll do it—they'll eat it up, sir!"

Thurlow's face brightened gradually. "I guess you're right, Haskett. I—I've got a weakness for letting the other fellow do my thinking, myself. That's what I liked about you—you showed me how I could divide up my responsibilities among the lot of you, with that conference scheme. How—what made you see all this? I don't see where you got your notion——"

Wilbur yielded to an impulse of confession. He leaned forward.

"It's just because I've always been a buckpasser myself," he said. "Only I never realized before today that it wasn't a special, private disgrace of my own. I've been trying to get over it——' he laughed. "Never again! Why, it's the whole secret of everything——"

"I shouldn't wonder," said Thomas Thurlow. "And while we're at it, I'll indulge myself a little more. Call up Fletcher and get the new order forms under way. Wire the road men to stop quoting the old price till further notice. And do anything else you think of. I'll leave it all to you!"

V

Simultaneously Wilbur Haskett confronted a disturbing realization and a spectacle which made coherent cerebration increasingly difficult.

The realization concerned his new philosophy, the doctrine which had rehabilitated the Thurlow Clock Works and lifted Wilbur Haskett himself, with almost the rapidity of a modern

elevator, to heights of affluence and importance from which, before his enlightenment he would have recoiled in dizzy horror.

For nearly ten months he had regarded it as an all-sufficient system of existence. His faith in it had steadily intensified under a succession of convincing proofs. The secret of achievement, he firmly believed, was to pass the buck as expeditiously and skilfully as one might. And he realized, now, that he had been mistaken. Sound and broad as was his system, it was not adequate to all problems. It failed here, in his greatest need.

The same spectacle which was rapidly rendering him incapable of rational thought was bringing home to him the existence of this problem, impressing him with its imperative need of a solution.

He tried weakly, to remove his glance, so that his attention might concentrate on a question which no one but Wilbur Haskett could answer, but his eyes refused to obey. They clung stubbornly to a silhouette against a young moon peering amiably through swaying masses of leafage; they observed the elusive play of this sifted radiance in soft, alluring hair; they were aware of the white, gossamer caress of a frock spun of cobwebs and starbeams. It was impossible to think, when such absurd, lyric figures of speech crowded into a fellow's mind.

And yet Wilbur knew that he must think. This thing had to be settled. He couldn't keep on putting it off. Every time it became harder to evade it. He'd simply got to make up his mind.

Make up his mind! He hated it, and all it connoted, more than ever, now that he no longer regarded it as an unattainable and Lacedæmonian virtue. Making up your mind was not only unpleasant—it was needless, silly, even harmful. You might so easily make it up wrong!

And a matter of such transcendental import as this—a decision which would affect and govern a fellow's whole life,

stretch out its ramifying consequences into distant generations . . . he felt himself flushing at the thought, for all the shadows, and resolutely drew away from it. He needn't worry about any one more remote than himself. That was quite enough of a problem, without complicating it. A mistake here and now, in the dappling moonlight, might wreck all his years beyond repair. It was awful to think of it—to know that alone, unaided, he must choose blindly between veiled futures—risking everything on a mere difference between speech and silence.

And yet it had to be done. He must decide, now—this very moment. Either he must commit himself irretrievably to the course which, merely contemplated, thrilled him with an ecstatic agony of hopes and fears, or he must put the idea sternly out of his mind for ever. He couldn't go on like this —not another instant. The torture of indecision was worse than the pang of resolution.

While his eyes clung more tightly than ever to the cause of this inner conflict, his mind searched frantically for escape from the menacing horns of the dilemma. Always, till now, there had been a way out of such impasses. There must be an escape here—there must be somebody to whom this could be referred.

He fingered a coin in his pocket. He might even leave it to the blind arbitrament of head and tail. But he rejected the thought. Chance was even blinder than Wilbur Haskett. This thing needed intelligence, logic, reason, forevision. If only there were somebody to decide—somebody who *knew*——

Suddenly light flamed in on him. He laughed at the blindness which had tormented him so long, so needlessly. The secret was still unmarred by any exception; life was still soluble at will by the simple magic of passing the buck! He leaned forward, eagerly.

"Cynthia——" he cleared his throat—"Cynthia, I want to get your opinion about—about something. What would you think of—of marrying me——?"

There was a breathless moment. And then, out of the moon-mist and shadow, Cynthia's voice came to him.

"I'd adore it," she said, "if—if you're sure you want me."

It was long afterward that he realized that the buck had returned to his keeping. But by that time it did not matter.

Reading List

Stories of Theme

Brown, Alice. "The Flying Teuton."

Cobb, Irvin. "The Thunders of Silence," "The Lord Provides."

Daudet, Alphonse. "The Last Class."

Deland, Margaret. "Good for the Soul."

Edwards, Harry S. "The Answer." (*See* Masson's *Short Stories from "Life."*)

Ferber, Edna. "Personality Plus," "Sisters Under Their Skins."

Hale, Edward E. "The Man Without a Country."

Halèvy, Ludovic. "The Insurgent."

Hawthorne, Nathaniel. "The Birthmark," "Dr. Heidegger's Experiment," "The Great Stone Face," "Feathertop," "The Ambitious Guest."

Henry, O. "Roads of Destiny."

Hurst, Fannie. "Bitter-Sweet."

Kahler, Hugh M. "The Obligee," "Babel," "Wild Carrot."

Kipling, Rudyard. "The Man Who Was."

London, Jack. "The Law of Life," "The Faith of Men," "The Love of Life," "When God Laughs."

Morris, Gouverneur. "You Can't Get Away With It."

Shore, Viola B. "The Heritage."

Steele, Wilbur D. "The Dark Hour" (*See* O'Brien, E. J., *Best Short Stories of 1918.*)

Tolstoi, Leo. "Where Love Is God Is," "How Much Land Does a Man Need?"

Van Dyke, Henry. "The Other Wise Man," "The Lost Word."

White, William Allen. "The Home-Coming of Colonel Hucks."

Widdemer, Margaret. "Don Andrews' Girl."

OPUS 43, NUMBER 6 *

By John Taintor Foote

I

A short time ago, if you reckon in centuries, Joshua issued a peremptory order to Old Sol, who meekly obeyed. I concede this to be something of a feat. It has been surpassed, however.

It was only yesterday that a Scandinavian gentleman sat down one winter day and made some marks on a piece of paper. When he finished the sun was going down blood-red across the snow; the shutters chattered in the icy wind; the fire, neglected, had gone out and the room was bitter cold. But the heart and soul of the Scandinavian gentleman were aflame. He scorned mere material warmth. He took the marks he had made to the piano.

Then as his fingers touched the keys the room grew balmy. It became fragrant with the breath of newborn violets. Brooks laughed. Birds sang. Butterflies flashed in the sunlight. A million lovers met and clung and kissed—for spring had come.

Now Joshua merely arrested the sun's attention for a few hours. The Scandinavian gentleman turned the solar system topsy-turvy.

Joshua failed to establish, for the benefit of a skeptical age,

* From *The Lucky Seven;* copyright, 1918, by D. Appleton and Company. Reprinted by permission of the author and the publishers.

a proof of his accomplishment. The Scandinavian gentleman has left the marks he made that winter day behind him. They are called Opus 43, Number 6. Their magic is undiminished. It was used quite recently by Leopold Vladimar Sczercrow, of Hungary. The facts in the case are as follows:

Leopold came to New York in the month of January. In the good ship *Deutschland* he had a safe passage and a fearful case of *mal de mer*. He disembarked feebly and stared about him in bewilderment.

To have the hero land and stare in bewilderment is the time-hallowed beginning of the immigrant story. Let me hasten to say that Leopold was not an immigrant. Though he had come to the United States to seek his fortune, and would work with his hands to accomplish it, he lacked a certain aroma that is the olfactory guaranty of the Simon-pure immigrant.

Leopold, therefore, was only a pianist. He had been decoyed from Budapest by Max Blumschein, impresario and agent, and his look of bewilderment was occasioned by the absence of Blumschein from the scene of his arrival.

His illness had kept him in his stateroom during the voyage. He had become acquainted with none of his fellow-passengers, and he now stood alone in the midst of a shrieking babble of greetings, no word of which he could understand.

At last he thought of Blumschein's letter in his pocket. He moved slowly to the pier entrance and found the driver of a taxicab. He pointed to the letterhead, climbed dejectedly into the taxicab and was whirled swiftly away.

A few moments later Max Blumschein looked up from the framing of a subtle contract.

"*Now* vat de hell do you vant?" he snapped.

A card was laid on his desk. He gazed at it a moment with bulging eyes.

"*Lieber Gott!*" he said at last. "I forgot him gomblete. Id all gomes from dese tamn' interrubtions; all de time id's

interrubtions—interrubtions! If I gollegt von idea together, in gomes somebody und sgatters id. Vy are you standing dere mit your mouth open? Show him in, addlepade!"

Leopold was shown in. He was still suffering from seasickness. His pale face was paler than usual. His dark eyes were black caverns of woe. Blumschein noted these symptoms with approval.

"Disbebtic!" he thought. "He can play dings in F minor. De press agend vill call his bellyache a segred sorrow." Aloud he said: "Ten tousand pardons, my dear meesder—er—Meesder—er—— I mecstoog your goming by von day. I t'oughd it was to-morrow yed. Ten tousand pardons, und velcome to Ameriga! You vill haf a splendid sugcess. Nefer have I seen handsomer billing dan has been done already for you in Glevelant, Zinzinnadi, Shigawgo, und oder poinds. I have pud you out as Vladimar, dropping—er—de lasd name, as vas done in Vienna. Haf you segured aggommodations in New York yed?"

Leopold smiled wanly.

"I speak no English," he said in French.

French was beyond Blumschein. He bellowed for "Feligs!" who duly appeared to act as interpreter.

Blumschein became more and more delighted with his new virtuoso as the interview progressed. Leopold, leaning back in his chair, with half-closed eyes, agreed wearily to everything suggested.

"Never haf I handled an ardisd mit such an ideal disbosition," thought the agent; but he came presently on a snag. "Haf him sign dis abbreciation of de Veelman piano, Feligs, before I take him to his hodel," said Blumschein, dipping pen in ink.

The interpreter explained. Leopold opened his eyes and answered briefly.

"He says he never heard of it," said the interpreter.

"Tell him—vot of id?" directed Blumschein. "Tell him he geds five hundred gash for id."

"He says," came the interpretation, "that he does not lie for five hundred dollars."

"Gott!" exploded Blumschein. "Tell him he is now in Ameriga. Tell him de gustom here is differend. Tell him he is tamn' lucky to get so much for von lie!"

Leopold, however, shook his head; and this should have prepared Blumschein for what happened later.

After three recitals in New York, the last of which was a triumph, the young Hungarian went *en tour.* Thanks to the New York critics and the expert press agent furnished by Blumschein, many came to hear the great Vladimar, with the secret sorrow and soulful eyes.

"Py *Gott!"* said Blumschein as he checked over the paid admittance sent to him from St. Louis. "Ve'll make de long-haired Bole look sig before ve're done yed."

In Kansas City Leopold stepped into melting slush up to his ankles. By the time he reached Chicago his eyes and nose were matched in a Marathon. The Windy City, true to her name, urged the contestants on. Leopold became more interested in athletics than in the Chopin E Minor Concerto. He decided not to play at Orchestra Hall that night.

"Come on, old scout!" urged the anxious press agent. "Show some pep! There's eight thousand in the house if there's a dime! Let's get this coin while the getting's good. What's a little cold?"

Leopold peered at the big black piano. It had a menacing look. The rippling hum of the tuning orchestra seemed a part of the roaring in his head.

"No possibeel," he said briefly. He turned up his coat collar, turned on his heel, and went back to the hotel.

Leopold's cold laid steady siege to him. The enemy camped in his chest and head. They rushed troops up and down his spine and sent icy skirmishers to his hands and feet. He lost three recitals in Chicago, but got to Detroit somehow, and was driven to the Detroit Opera House, burning and shivering by turns.

"They're all out there," the press agent told him—"Mr. and Mrs. Packard, Miss Chalmers, and all the little Fords. Now fly at it!"

Leopold flew at the terrific Variations on a Theme of Paganini's, by Brahms. When he finished they "tore the house down," as the press agent put it; but Leopold, between sniffles, called himself a "butchair" and would play no more.

"Why, kid, it was swell!" said the press agent. "Listen to 'em!"

"Ba-ad," said Leopold. "R-rottan! No tawch; no tone; no nutting!"

That ended his tour. He went back to New York the next day. Blumschein, after frenzied pleadings, canceled Cleveland, Buffalo and Boston, with tears in his eyes.

Leopold waited in New York for two recitals he was to give in the latter part of March. His cold grew better, but he suffered from homesickness. From his fifth year on he had spent most of his waking hours at a piano. He knew little of his fellow-men. His shy musician's soul fled deep within him at contact with these brisk Americans. At a reception where he was supposed to roar, the press agent watched his more than agony from behind some potted palms and pronounced him a "bum mixer!"

Leopold was left to his own devices from then on.

One night he passed the blazing sign of a Hungarian restaurant. A longing to hear his native tongue turned him back and drew him within. The café's interior proved more modest than its flamboyant sign. From every side, however, came words that Leopold could understand. He ordered his dinner, gave a sigh of contentment, and beamed about him.

Seated at a piano, her hands folded in her lap, was a girl. She chanced to be looking his way. As their eyes met Leopold experienced an extraordinary sensation. For an instant it lasted; then her glance traveled past him with tired indifference. Leopold seemed to have taken some swift elixir

which was sending warm and tingling waves through his veins.

From that moment he watched her surreptitiously, half fearful, half hoping she would look at him again. She failed to do so. She played MacDowell's "To a Water Lily" instead. Leopold shuddered.

She played twice more before he left, but never looked his way again, though he spent an hour over his dinner.

He dined at the restaurant the next three evenings. Nothing happened. On the fourth evening the table near her was already taken by a red-haired man with a beard. This alarmed him. By cunning questions he drew from the waiter that through a conference with the proprietor he might reserve any table he wished.

Leopold summoned his courage and the proprietor.

Yes; he might have the same table every night. Which table did he prefer, and at what hour?

Leopold looked about the room as though making a selection. At last, not meeting the proprietor's eye, he decided on the one in the corner near the piano. He blushed slightly when it was promised to him for seven o'clock each evening.

Would the proprietor join him in a glass of kummel?

The proprietor would, and did, and talked of Hungary and of Leopold's own beloved Budapest.

On Friday night a wonderful thing happened. As he took his seat she was staring at the keyboard, her hands, as was her custom, folded in her lap.

Leopold had not seen her for twenty-three hours. He was assuring himself that her profile had not changed, when she looked up so suddenly that he had no time to drop his eyes. He had the same delicious shock he had treasured in his memory; then—dreadful to behold!—she frowned.

Leopold grew red with shame. Instantly her frown disappeared. The corners of her mouth lifted in the faintest of smiles as she barely nodded.

Leopold, while getting back to his hotel, was all but run over by a truck. She had noticed him! She had bowed to him!

A few nights later he did a deed of consummate daring. He waited until she had left the café, then asked the proprietor about her. He learned that, like Tommy Tucker, she played for her supper—also for her breakfast; that she gave lessons on the piano, and that she was a good girl. Leopold did not doubt it.

Did the proprietor know her address? The proprietor looked searchingly into Leopold's face.

"I wish," explained Leopold, "to have instruction on the piano."

The proprietor's fat, moist fingers closed on Leopold's long, slender hand.

"You are sure of that, my son?"

"On the honor of a Hungarian," said Leopold.

"Good!" said the proprietor. "I will give you the address."

II

Miss Della Hicks was tilting her head before the frowning face of Beethoven, whom she had just tacked up on the studio wall. I say studio, following the precedent of Miss Hicks, who thus referred to her apartment.

Speaking without enthusiasm, it was a second-floor back room in need of plaster, wall paper and more light. Its one window was now staring at the contortions of a red woolen undershirt and drawers, a pair of gray wool socks with white heels and toes, and a limp white shirt of the boiled variety, strung on a wire in the court below.

It would be easy to enumerate the furniture which the room contained; but how she furnished her studio is Miss Hicks's own affair. I will call attention, however, to the piano. It

was an upright, made of oak, with a bench to match. To keep it in its present place by means of a monthly rental was a problem.

Miss Hicks had faced many problems since leaving Utica, Ohio. Spurred on by the enthusiasm of her fellow-townsmen, her journey to the larger city was of an incendiary character. Her music was to set New York afire. So far, Chief Croker and his band had found no trouble in controlling the blaze.

Having assured herself that Mr. Beethoven, despite his frown, was adding to the studio's atmosphere, Miss Hicks thought of luncheon. When one is twenty-two the appetite is a thing to be reckoned with. She had found this fact to be one of her problems.

She proceeded to solve it on this occasion by assembling on the table three macaroons and a stick of milk chocolate. She was busy with a tea-kettle when the boards in the hall floor creaked the announcement of a visitor. Miss Hicks set a chipped teacup on the table as there came a gentle knocking at the door.

"Come!" she said.

Leopold stood in the doorway.

"Well?" said Miss Hicks.

Leopold said nothing. He had been walking round and round the block for two hours. His arrival at her door should be mentioned with the doings of David, Horatius, Charlotte Corday, and Barney Oldfield. It left him incapable of further effort.

Miss Hicks had been regarding him with a frank, almost boyish look that was peculiarly her own.

"I'll thank you to close that door," she said at last.

For the second time Leopold turned fiery red under her eyes. Since his agony had made him chalklike until now, the change was startling. It saved the day. A dangerous person could never blush like that.

"Do you want to see me?" asked Miss Hicks in a more kindly tone.

Leopold swallowed, and produced his card and a letter. The letter was from the proprietor of the restaurant where she played. It recommended the bearer, who wished instruction on the piano. Miss Hicks read it over twice.

"Oh!" she said. "Come in, Mr.——" Here she glanced at the card. "Mr.—er—— Come in!"

From then on, Leopold's artistic endeavors made a *volte-face*. For twenty years, humbly, passionately, he had wooed his piano. Little by little it had yielded to him. At last its elusive, quivering, marvelous soul had become his to do with as he liked. Now for an hour each Monday, Wednesday and Saturday he proved a fickle lover. He strove to forget.

During lessons his fingers lost their swift and panther-like dexterity. They became clumsy wooden mallets, while Leopold's forehead grew damp with sweat. It was a prodigious feat, unique in the history of musical accomplishment and fraught with danger. He learned this at his second lesson.

He was attempting a scale. He had worked up through the treble and was coming back laboriously to the middle register when Miss Hicks, in calling attention to the third finger of the left hand, allowed her hair to brush his temple.

The result was disastrous. Leopold's fingers ran wild. The scale ripped through the middle register like a Gatling gun and finished with magnificent thunder in the bass.

"Good Lord!" said Miss Hicks, and stabbed the quaking Leopold with round and questioning eyes.

"What was that? What did you do then?"

"Sleep!" apologized Leopold; and this was entirely true.

"Slip!" repeated Miss Hicks. "How slip? Do it again!"

Then Leopold lapsed from truthtelling.

"No possibeel," he informed her, shaking his head. "Hands sleep."

Miss Hicks regarded him with hard suspicion.

"Well, it's mighty funny!" she said at last. "My hands never slipped like that in all my life. Say, where do you come from anyway? Why are you taking music lessons?"

There followed a bad ten minutes for Leopold. He wore through it somehow, and the lesson was resumed. From then on he applied a rigid concentration to his task.

At the end of two weeks, despite six lessons, his music teacher seemed as remote and inaccessible to Leopold as the princess in the fairy tale, who lived on a mountain made of glass.

What few women he had known were Hungarians. Their glances were either mysterious or inviting. Their very atmosphere was amorous. A man in their eyes was a possible lover or—nothing. Miss Hicks, slim, blond, businesslike, was not at all like that.

He became dumb before her, rarely met her eye, and left her with a formal bow, to dream the things he might have said had he the courage and the vocabulary.

In Utica, Ohio, all foreigners were queer. Miss Hicks was loyal to her own. Leopold's bow, though it came to him from ancestors who had spent five centuries at court to learn it, was funny! So was Leopold, when she thought of him at all. His few attempts at English amused her. His last name was beyond her. It looked like Scarecrow, and that was what she called him. She never saw him except at lessons. He had given up his table at the restaurant. He felt that staring at her in a public place lacked delicacy.

Toward the end of March, Miss Hicks received a note. It contained a windfall. Flora Madden, once of Utica, now of Brooklyn, inclosed a ticket to Carnegie Hall.

"I wouldn't miss it for anything," wrote Mrs. Madden; "but I've got to have some business friends of papa's to dinner. I sold one to a speculator; but you take the other, dear! It's to hear Vladimar—they say he's wonderful!"

Miss Hicks entered New York's musical Mecca the following night. She was shown by an usher to one of the most expensive seats—Mr. Madden sold a great many vacuum cleaners.

All about her were ladies with jewels about their necks

and nothing at all on their backs. They gave off faint perfumes and bent to their escorts with charming, low-voiced murmurs. Miss Hicks, too happy to be conscious of her shortcomings in the matter of toilet, drank it all in rapturously.

At last her attention was focused, with a thrill, on the stage. It centered on a giant piano, black as night, that blinked sleepily in the glare of the footlights. It seemed like some great beast, sullen, ominous, that crouched there—waiting.

Gloved hands pattered like rain. The beast's master had appeared. He was slender, pale, with dark, unfathomable eyes. He drew his heels together and made a funny foreign bow.

"Why!" shrieked Miss Hicks. "It's Scarecrow!"

Fortunately the applause drowned her voice. Only those near her turned to frown. She never saw them. Her brain reeled as it assured her that it really was Scarecrow.

The evening was a dream. Even the music, flooding the house like celestial wine, seemed a vague accompaniment to her thoughts. They were mostly questions.

Why had he come to her for lessons? Why had he stumbled over simple little pieces? Why? Why? Why?

She would not let him in when he came next day! . . . Of couse she would, if only to find out. . . . Maybe he was crazy —he was a genius and a foreigner! Maybe it was not safe to let him in! He had always been respectful, though—almost shy. She could call to that plumber in the store below if he got wild. . . . And she simply must find out!

Leopold came serenely to his lesson. No; hardly that—he was never serene as he approached the flight of stairs that led to his hour with her; but he was, at least, unsuspecting. He did not associate her with the jeweled and rustling audience of the night before. He was not prepared to have her give him a wild look and get hastily behind the table.

He moved across the room and stood uncertainly by the piano.

"Lezzon?" he suggested timidly.

Miss Hicks wet her lips with the tip of her tongue. She remained behind the table.

"Where were you last night?" she inquired.

The guilty Leopold grew scarlet.

That restored her courage. He was the old Scarecrow when he blushed—not the wonderful though mad being who turned a piano into a choir of heavenly voices. She came part way from behind the table.

"Why have you been coming here?" she demanded.

Leopold gazed at her helplessly.

"Muzeek lezzons," he offered weakly.

Miss Hicks laughed him to scorn. She withdrew altogether from the protection of the table and confronted him.

"Music lessons—your grandmother!" she said. "I was at Carnegie Hall last night. Now, why have you been coming here?"

Leopold met her level glance and quailed to his marrow before it. He could deceive her no longer! Where was he to find words to tell her? It would have been a terrifying task in warm Hungarian. In his limping, contemptible English it was sacrilege to think of it. He looked in dumb hopelessness about the poor, dear and now familiar room. He was about to be swept out of it forever. His eyes came at last to the piano. They widened slowly.

"Seet down!" he said with an imploring gesture.

She did so, wondering. Leopold sank to the piano bench and gathered a great sheaf of golden notes in his hands.

Outside, the plumber's washing danced in the cold March wind. Over the court wall Miss Hicks could see a bare and lonely tree. Its forlorn background was a wind-swept tenement house.

She had one desolate glimpse of all this—then it was gone. . . . Rich meadows, velvet green, stretched on and on before her. Her nostrils were filled with the breath of newborn violets. Brooks laughed. Birds sang. Butterflies flashed in the sunlight. A million lovers met and clung and kissed

—for Leopold had called on the magic of the Scandinavian gentleman.

Miss Hicks was stirred by nameless longings, sweet beyond words or thought. They made her heart flutter and surge. They filled her throat and eyes.

And now the sun went down and a yellow moon hung above breathless trees. . . . Leopold had done it. Technically, he was improvising on the theme of Opus 43, Number 6. In reality he took Miss Hicks by the hand and led her to a moonlit glade. Then he whispered—whispered to her, while nightingales sang. He was no longer funny. . . . He was dear beyond all earthly things—her own! Her very own!

Suddenly black terror seized her—he was leaving—he was gone! . . . She looked up to see him standing by the piano, back in her own room.

"Zat, deer von," he said, "ees vy I kom!"

Miss Hicks raised one hand to her throat—tiny hammers were beating there. Her eyes were no longer frank and boyish. They had become deep pools of mystery.

"I'm—glad—you—came!" she breathed, and flushed into a pink glory.

Leopold discovered that his arms could do more than sweep from end to end of the keyboard.

THE LAST ROOM OF ALL *

By Stephen French Whitman

In those days all Italy was in turmoil and Lombardy lay covered with blood and fire. The emperor, the second Frederick of Swabia, was out to conquer once for all. His man Salinguerra held the town of Ferrara. The Marquis Azzo, being driven forth, could slake his rage only on such outlying castles as favored the imperial cause.

Of these castles the Marquis Azzo himself sacked and burned many. But against the castle of Grangioia, remote in the hills, he sent his captain, Lapo Cercamorte.

This Lapo Cercamorte was nearly forty years old, a warrior from boyhood, uncouth, barbaric, ferocious. One could think of no current danger that he had not encountered, no horror that he had not witnessed. His gaunt face was dull red, as if baked by the heat of blazing towns. His coarse black hair had been thinned by the friction of his helmet. His nose was broken, his arms and legs were covered with scars, and under his chin ran a seam made by a woman who had tried to cut off his head while he lay asleep. From this wound Lapo Cercamorte's voice was husky and uncertain.

With a hundred men at his back he rode by night to Grangioia Castle. As day was breaking, by a clever bit of stratagem he rushed the gate.

Then in that towering, thick-walled fortress, which had

* From *Harper's Magazine* for June, 1920; copyright, 1920, by Harper & Brothers. Reprinted by permission of the author and the publishers.

suddenly become a trap, sounded the screaming of women, the boom of yielding door, the clang of steel on black staircases, the battle-cries, wild songs, and laughter of Lapo Cercamorte's soldiers.

He found the family at bay in their hall, the father and his three sons naked except for the shirts of mail that they had hastily slipped on. Behind these four huddled the Grangioia women and children, for the most part pallid from fury rather than from fear, silently awaiting the end.

However, Cercamorte's purpose was not to destroy this clan, but to force it into submission to his marquis. So, when he had persuaded them to throw down their swords, he put off his flat-topped helmet and seated himself with the Grangioia men.

A bargain ensued; he gave them their lives in exchange for their allegiance. And it would have ended there had not the sun, reaching in through a casement toward the group of silent women, touched the face of old Grangioia's youngest daughter, Madonna Gemma.

From the crown of her head, whence her hair fell in bright ripples like a gush of gold from the ladle of a goldsmith, to her white feet, bare on the pavement, Madonna Gemma was one fragile piece of beauty. In this hall heavy with torch smoke and the sweat of many soldiers, in this ring of bloodstained weapons and smoldering eyes, she appeared like a delicate dreamer enveloped by a nightmare. Yet even the long stare of Lapo Cercamorte she answered with a look of defiance.

The conqueror rose, went jingling to her, thumbed a strand of her bright hair, touched her soft cheek with his fingers, which smelled of leather and horses. Grasping her by the elbow, he led her forward.

"Is this your daughter, Grangioia? Good. I will take her as a pledge of your loyalty."

With a gesture old Grangioia commanded his sons to sit

still. After glowering round him at the wall of mail, he let his head sink down, and faltered:

"Do you marry her, Cercamorte?"

"Why not?" croaked Lapo. "Having just made a peace shall I give offense so soon? No, in this case I will do everything according to honor."

That morning Lapo Cercamorte espoused Madonna Gemma Grangioia. Then, setting her behind his saddle on a cushion, he took her away to his own castle. This possession, too, he had won for himself with his sword. It was called the Vespaione, the Big Hornets' Nest. Rude and strong, it crowned a rocky hilltop in a lonely region. At the base of the hill clustered a few huts; beyond lay some little fields; then the woods spread their tangles afar.

Madonna Gemma, finding herself in this prison, did not weep or utter a sound for many days.

Here Lapo Cercamorte, pouncing upon such a treasure as had never come within his reach before, met his first defeat. His fire proved unable to melt that ice. His coarse mind was benumbed by the exquisiteness of his antagonist. Now, instead of terror and self-abasement, he met scorn—the cold contempt of a being rarified, and raised above him by centuries of gentler thought and living. When he laid his paws on her shoulders he felt that he held there a pale, soft shell, empty of her incomprehensible spirit, which at his touch had vanished into space.

So he stood baffled, with a new longing that groped blindly through the veils of flesh and blood, like a brute tormented by the dawning of some insatiable aspiration.

It occurred to him that the delicate creature might be pleased if her surroundings were less soldierly. So oiled linen was stretched across her windows, and a carpet laid for her feet at table in the hall. The board was spread with a white cloth on which she might wipe her lips, and in spring the pavement of her bower was strewn with scented herbs.

Also he saw to it that her meat was seasoned with quinces, that her wine was spiced on feast-days.

He got her a little greyhound, but it sickened and died. Remembering that a comrade-in-arms possessed a Turkish dwarf with an abnormally large head, he cast about to procure some such monstrosity for her amusement. He sent her jewelry—necklaces torn by his soldiers from the breasts of ladies in surrendered towns, rings wrested from fingers raised in supplication.

She wore none of these trinkets. Indeed, she seemed oblivious of all his efforts to change her.

He left her alone.

Finally, whenever Lapo Cercamorte met her in the hall his face turned dark and bitter. Throughout the meal there was no sound except the growling of dogs among the bones beneath the table, the hushed voices of the soldiers eating in the body of the hall. Old one-eyed Baldo, Cercamorte's lieutenant, voiced the general sentiment when he muttered into his cup:

"This house has become a tomb, and I have a feeling that presently there may be corpses in it."

"She has the evil eye," another assented.

Furtively making horns with their fingers, they looked up askance toward the dais, at her pale young beauty glimmering through rays of dusty sunshine.

"Should there come an alarm our shield-straps would burst and our weapons crack like glass. If only, when we took Grangioia Castle, a sword had accidentally cut off her nose!"

"God give us our next fighting in the open, far away from this *jettatrice!*"

It presently seemed as if that wish were to be granted. All the Guelph party were then preparing to take the field together. In Cercamorte's castle, dice-throwing and drinking gave place to drinking and plotting. Strange messengers appeared. In an upper chamber a shabby priest from the

nearest town—the stronghold of Count Nicolotto Muti—neatly wrote down, at Lapo's dictation, the tally of available men, horses, and arms. Then one morning Cercamorte said to Baldo, his lieutenant:

"I am off for a talk with Nicolotto Muti. The house is in your care."

And glumly Lapo rode down from his castle, without a glance toward the casements of Madonna Gemma's bower.

She watched him depart alone, his helmet dangling from his saddle-bow. Then she saw, below her on the hillside, also watching him, the horse-boy, Foresto, his graceful figure hinting at an origin superior to his station, his dark, peaked face seeming to mask some avid and sinister dream. Was she wrong in suspecting that Foresto hated Lapo Cercamorte? Might he not become an ally against her husband?

Her gaze traveled on to the houses at the foot of the hill, to the hut where, under Lapo's protection, dwelt a renegade Arabian, reputed to be a sorcerer. No doubt the Arabian knew of subtle poisons, charms that withered men's bodies, enchantments that wrecked the will and reduced the mind to chaos.

But soon these thoughts were scattered by the touch of the spring breeze. She sank into a vague wonder at life, which had so cruelly requited the fervors of her girlhood.

On the third day of Cercamorte's absence, while Madonna Gemma was leaning on the parapet of the keep, there appeared at the edge of the woods a young man in light-blue tunic and hood, a small gilded harp under his arm

Because he was the young brother of Nicolotto Muti they admitted him into the castle.

His countenance was effeminate, fervent, and artful. The elegance of his manner was nearly Oriental. The rough soldiers grinned in amusement, or frowned in disgust. Madonna Gemma, confronted by his strangeness and complexity, neither frowned nor smiled, but looked more wan than ever.

Perfumed with sandalwood, in a white, gold-stitched robe, its bodice tight, its skirts voluminous, she welcomed him in the hall. The reception over, old Baldo spoke with the crone who served Madonna Gemma as maid:

"I do not know what this pretty little fellow has in mind. While I watch him for spying, do you watch him for love-making. If we discover him at neither, perhaps he has caught that new green-sickness from the north, and thinks himself a singing-bird."

A singing-bird was what Raffaele Muti proved to be.

In the Mediterranean lands a new idea was beginning to alter the conduct of society. Woman, so long regarded as a soulless animal, born only to drag men down, was being transfigured into an immaculate goddess, an angel in human shape, whose business was man's reformation, whose right was man's worship.

That cult of Woman had been invented by the lute-playing nobles of Provence. But quickly it had begun to spread from court to court, from one land to another. So now, in Italy as in southern France, sometimes in wild hill castles as well as in the city palaces, a hymn of adoration rose to the new divinity.

This was the song that Raffaele Muti, plucking at his twelve harp strings. raised in the hall of the Big Hornets' Nest at twilight.

He sat by the fireplace on the guests' settee, beside Madonna Gemma. The torches, dripping fire in the wall-rings, cast their light over the faces of the wondering servants. The harp twanged its plaintive interlude; then the song continued, quavering, soaring, athrob with this new pathos and reverence, that had crept like the counterfeit of a celestial dawn upon a world long obscured by a brutish dusk.

Raffaele Muti sang of a woman exalted far above him by her womanhood, which rivaled Godhood in containing all the virtues requisite for his redemption. Man could no longer sin when once she had thought pityingly of him. Every

deed must be noble if rooted in love of her. All that one asked was to worship her ineffable superiority. How grievously should one affront her virtue, if ever one dreamed of kisses! But should one dream of them, pray God she might never stoop that far in mercy! No, passion must never mar this shrine at which Raffaele knelt.

In the ensuing silence, which quivered from that cry, there stole into the heart of Madonna Gemma an emotion more precious, just then, than the peace that follows absolution—a new-born sense of feminine dignity, a glorious blossoming of pride, commingled with the tenderness of an immeasurable gratitude.

About to part for the night, they exchanged a look of tremulous solemnity.

Her beauty was no longer bleak, but rich—all at once too warm, perhaps, for a divinity whose only office was the guidance of a troubadour toward asceticism. Her frail comeliness was radiant with his poetical ecstasy—of a sudden too flushed, one would think, for a youth whose aspirations were all toward the intangible. Then each emerged with a start from that delicious spell, to remember the staring servants.

They said good night. Madonna Gemma ascended to her chamber.

It was the horse-boy Foresto who, with a curious solicitude and satisfaction, lighted Raffaele Muti up to bed.

But old Baldo, strolling thoughtfully in the courtyard, caught a young cricket chirping in the grass between two paving-stones. On the cricket's back, with a straw and white paint, he traced the Muti device—a tree transfixed by an arrow. Then he put the cricket into a little iron box together with a rose, and gave the box to a man-at-arms, saying:

"Ride to Lapo Cercamorte and deliver this into his hands."

Next day, on the sunny tower, high above the hillside covered with spring flowers, Raffaele resumed his song. He sat at the feet of Madonna Gemma, who wore a grass-green

gown embroidered with unicorns, emblems of purity. The crone was there also, pretending to doze in the shadows; and so was Foresto the horse-boy, whose dark, still face seemed now and again to mirror Raffaele's look of exultation—a look that came only when Madonna Gemma gazed away from him.

But for the most part she gazed down at Raffaele's singing lips, on which she discerned no guile.

Tireless, he sang to her of a world fairer even than that of her maidenhood. It was a region where for women all feeling of abasement ceased, because there the troubadour, by his homage, raised one's soul high above the tyranny of uncomprehending husbands.

She learned—for so it had been decided in Provence—that high sentiment was impossible in wedlock at its best; that between husband and wife there was no room for love. Thus, according to the Regula Amoris, it was not only proper, but also imperative, to seek outside the married life some lofty love-alliance.

The day wore on thus. The sun had distilled from many blossoms the whole intoxicating fragrance of the springtime. A golden haze was changing Madonna Gemma's prison into a paradise.

Her vision was dimmed by a glittering film of tears. Her fingers helplessly unfolded on her lap. She believed that at last she had learned love's meaning. And Raffaele, for all his youth no novice at this game, believed that this dove, too, was fluttering into his cage.

By sunset their cheeks were flaming. At twilight their hands turned cold.

Then they heard the bang of the gate and the croaking voice of Lapo Cercamorte.

He entered the hall as he had so often entered the houses of terror-stricken enemies, clashing at each ponderous, swift step, his mail dusty, his hair wet and disheveled, his dull-red face resembling a mask of heated iron. That atmosphere,

just now swimming in languor, was instantly permeated by a wave of force, issuing from his herculean body and barbaric brain. When he halted before those two they seemed to feel the heat that seethed in his steel-bound breast.

His disfigured face still insolvable, Lapo Cercamorte plunged his stare into Madonna Gemma's eyes, then looked into the eyes of Raffaele. His hoarse voice broke the hush; he said to the young man:

"So you are the sister of my friend Count Nicolotto?"

Raffaele, having licked his lips, managed to answer:

"You mean his brother, sir."

Lapo Cercamorte laughed loud; but his laugh was the bark of a hyena, and his eyes were balls of fire.

"No! with these legs and ringlets? Come here, Baldo. Here is a girl who says she is a man. What do you say, to speak only of this pretty skin of hers?"

And with his big hand suddenly he ripped open Raffaele's tunic half way to the waist, exposing the fair white flesh. The troubadour, though quivering with shame and rage, remained motionless, staring at the great sword that hung in its scarlet sheath from Lapo's harness.

Old one-eyed Baldo, plucking his master by the elbow, whispered: "Take care, Cercamorte. His brother Nicolotto is your ally. Since, after all, nothing much has happened, do not carry the offense too far."

"Are you in your dotage?" Lapo retorted, still glaring with a dreadful interest at Raffaele's flesh. "Do you speak of giving offense, when all I desire is to be as courteous as my uneducated nature will allow? She must pardon me that slip of the hand; I meant only to stroke her cheek in compliment, but instead I tore her dress. Yet I will be a proper courtier to her still. Since she is now set on going home, I myself, alone, will escort her clear to the forest, in order to set her upon the safe road."

And presently Madonna Gemma, peering from her chamber window, saw her husband, with a ghastly pretense of

care, lead young Raffaele Muti down the hill, into the darkness from which there came never a sound.

It was midnight when Lapo Cercamorte re-entered the castle, and called for food and drink.

Now the shadow over the Big Hornets' Nest obscured even the glare of the summer sun. No winsome illusion of nature's could brighten this little world that had at last turned quite sinister. In the air that Madonna Gemma breathed was always a chill of horror. At night the thick walls seemed to sweat with it, and the silence was like a great hand pressed across a mouth struggling to give vent to a scream.

At dinner in the hall she ate nothing, but drank her wine as though burning with a fever. Sometimes, when the stillness had become portentous, Lapo rolled up his sleeves, inspected his scarred, swarthy arms, and mumbled, with the grin of a man stretched on the rack:

"Ah, Father and Son! if only one had a skin as soft, white, and delicate as a girl's!"

At this Madonna Gemma left the table.

Once more her brow became bleaker than a winter mountain; her eyes were haggard from nightmares; she trembled at every sound. Pacing her bower, interminably she asked herself one question. And at last, when Lapo would have passed her on the stairs, she hurled into his face:

"What did you do to Raffaele Muti?"

He started, so little did he expect to hear her voice. His battered countenance turned redder, as he noted that for the sake of the other she was like an overstretched bow, almost breaking. Then a pang stabbed him treacherously. Fearing that she might discern his misery, he turned back, leaving her limp against the wall.

He took to walking the runway of the ramparts, gnawing his fingers and muttering to himself, shaking his tousled hair. With a sigh, as if some thoughts were too heavy a

burden for that iron frame, he sat down on an archer's ledge, to stare toward the hut of the renegade Arabian. Often at night he sat thus, hour after hour, a coarse creature made romantic by a flood of moonlight. And as he bowed his head the sentinel heard him fetch a groan such as one utters whose life escapes through a sword-wound.

One-eyed Baldo also groaned at these goings-on, and swallowed many angry speeches. But Foresto the horse-boy began to hum at his work.

This Foresto had attached himself to Lapo's force in the Ferrarese campaign. His habits were solitary. Often when his work was done he wandered into the woods, to return with a capful of berries or a squirrel that he had snared. Because he was silent, deft, and daintier than a horse-boy ought to be, Lapo finally bade him serve Madonna Gemma.

Watching his dark, blank face as he strewed fresh herbs on her pavement, she wondered:

"Does he know the truth?"

Their glances met; he seemed to send her a veiled look of comprehension and promise. But whenever he appeared the crone was there.

One morning, however, Foresto had time to whisper:

"The Arabian."

What did that mean? Was the Arab magician, recluse in his wretched hut below the castle, prepared to serve her? Was it through him and Foresto that she might hope to escape or at the least to manage some revenge? Thereafter she often watched the renegade's window, from which, no matter how late the hour, shone a glimmering of lamplight. Was he busy at his magic? Could those spells be enlisted on her side?

Then, under an ashen sky of autumn, as night was creeping in, she saw the Arabian ascending the hill to the castle. His tall figure, as fleshless as a mummy's, was swathed in a white robe like a winding-sheet; his beaked face and hollow

eye-sockets were like a vision of Death. Without taking her eyes from him, Madonna Gemma crossed herself.

Baldo came to the gate. The ghostly Arabian uttered:

"Peace be with you. I have here, under my robe, a packet for your master."

"Good! Pass it over to me, unless it will turn my nose into a carrot, or add a tail to my spine."

The foreigner, shaking his skull-like head, responded:

"I must give this packet into no hands but his."

So Baldo led the sorcerer to Cercamorte, and for a long while those two talked together in private.

Next day Madonna Gemma noted that Lapo had on a new, short, sleeveless surcoat, or vest, of whitish leather, trimmed on its edges with vair, and laced down the sides with tinsel. In this festive garment, so different from his usual attire, the grim tyrant was ill at ease, secretly anxious, almost timid. Avoiding her eye, he assumed an elaborate carelessness, like that of a boy who had been up to some deviltry. Madonna Gemma soon found herself connecting this change in him with the fancy white-leather vest.

In the hall, while passing a platter of figs, Foresto praised the new garment obsequiously. He murmured:

"And what a fine skin it is made of! So soft, so delicate, so lustrous in its finish! Is it pigskin, master? Ah, no; it is finer than that. Kidskin? But a kid could not furnish a skin as large as this one. No doubt it is made from some queer foreign animal, perhaps from a beast of Greece or Arabia?"

While speaking these words, Foresto flashed one look, mournful and eloquent, at Madonna Gemma, then softly withdrew from the hall.

She sat motionless, wave after wave of cold flowing in through her limbs to her heart. She stared, as though at a basilisk, at Lapo's new vest, in which she seemed to find the

answer so long denied her. The hall grew dusky; she heard a far-off cry, and when she meant to flee, she fainted in her chair.

For a week Madonna Gemma did not rise from her bed. When finally she did rise she refused to leave her room.

But suddenly Lapo Cercamorte was gayer than he had been since the fall of Grangioia Castle. Every morning, when he had inquired after Madonna Gemma's health, and had sent her all kinds of tidbits, he went down to sit among his men, to play mora, to test sword-blades, to crack salty jokes, to let loose his husky guffaw. At times, cocking his eye toward certain upper casements, he patted his fine vest furtively, with a gleeful and mischievous grin. To Baldo, after some mysterious nods and winks, he confided:

"Everything will be different when she is well again."

"No doubt," snarled old Baldo, scrubbing at his mail shirt viciously. "Though I am not in your confidence, I agree that a nice day is coming, a beautiful day—like a pig. Look you, Cercamorte, shake off this strange spell of folly. Prepare for early trouble. Just as a Venetian sailor can feel a storm of water brewing, so can I feel, gathering far off, a storm of arrows. Do you notice that the crows hereabouts have never been so thick? Perhaps, too, I have seen a face peeping out of the woods, about the time that Foresto goes down to pick berries."

"You chatter like an old woman at a fountain," said Lapo, still caressing his vest with his palms. "I shall be quite happy soon—yes, even before the Lombard league takes the field."

Baldo raised his shoulders, pressed his withered eyelids together, and answered, in disgust:

"God pity you, Cercamorte! You are certainly changed these days. Evidently your Arabian has given you a charm that turns men's brains into goose-eggs."

Lapo stamped away angrily, yet he was soon smiling again.

And now his coarse locks were not unkempt, but cut square

across brow and neck. Every week he trimmed his fingernails; every day or so, with a flush and a hangdog look, he drenched himself with perfume. Even while wearing that garment—at thought of which Madonna Gemma, isolate in her chamber, still shivered and moaned—Cercamorte resembled one who prepares himself for a wedding, or gallant rendezvous, that may take place any moment.

Sometimes, reeking with civet-oil, he crept to her door, eavesdropped, pondered the quality of her sighs, stood hesitant, then stealthily withdrew, grinding his teeth and wheezing:

"Not yet. Sweet saints in heaven, what a time it takes!"

He loathed his bed, because of the long hours of sleeplessness. He no longer slept naked. At night, too, his body was encased in the vest of whitish soft skin.

One morning a horseman in green and yellow scallops appeared before the castle. It was Count Nicolotto Muti, elder brother of the troubadour Raffaele.

Lapo, having arranged his features, came down to meet the count. They kissed, and entered the keep with their arms around each other's shoulders. Foresto brought in the guest-cup.

Nicolotto Muti was a thin, calm politician, elegant in his manners and speech, his lips always wearing a sympathetic smile. By the fireplace, after chatting of this and that, he remarked, with his hand affectionately on Cercamorte's knee:

"I am trying to find trace of my little Raffaele, who has vanished like a mist. It is said that he was last seen in this neighborhood. Can you tell me anything?"

Lapo, his face expressionless, took thought, then carefully answered:

"Muti, because we are friends as well as allies I will answer you honestly. Returning from my visit with you, I found him in this hall, plucking a harp and singing love-songs to my wife. I say frankly that if he had not been your brother

I should have cut off his hands and his tongue. Instead, I escorted him to the forest and set him on the home road. I admit that before I parted from him I preached him a sermon on the duties of boys toward the friends of their families. Nay, fearing that he might not relate his adventure to you, in that discourse I somewhat pounded the pulpit. Well, yes, I confess that I gave him a little spanking."

Count Nicolotto, without showing any surprise, or losing his fixed smile, declared:

"Dear comrade, it was a young man, not a child, whom you chastised in that way. In another instance, as of course you know, such an action would have been a grievous insult to all his relatives. Besides, I am sure that he meant no more than homage to your lady—a compliment common enough in these modern times, and honorably reflected upon the husband. However, I can understand the feelings of one who has been too much in the field to learn those innocent new gallantries. Indeed, I presume that I should thank you for what you believed to be a generous forbearance. But all this does not find me my brother."

And with a sad, gentle smile Count Nicolotto closed his frosty eyes.

Cercamorte, despite all this cooing, received an impression of enmity. As always when danger threatened, he became still and wary, much more resourceful than ordinarily, as if perils were needed to render him complete. Smoothing his vest with his fingers that were flattened from so much sword-work, Lapo said:

"I feel now that I may have been wrong to put such shame upon him. On account of it, no doubt, he has sought retirement. Or maybe he has journeyed abroad, say to Provence, a land free from such out-of-date bunglers as I."

Nicolotto Muti made a deprecatory gesture, then rose with a rustle of his green and yellow scallops, from which was shaken a fragrance of attar.

"My good friend, let us hope so."

It was Foresto who, in the courtyard, held Muti's stirrup, and secretly pressed into the visitor's hand a pellet of parchment. For Foresto could write excellent Latin.

No sooner had Count Nicolotto regained his strong town than a shocking rumor spread round—Lapo Cercamorte had made Raffaele Muti's skin into a vest, with which to drive his wife mad.

In those petty Guelph courts, wherever the tender lore of Provence had sanctified the love of troubadour for great lady, the noblemen cried out in fury; the noblewomen, transformed into tigresses, demanded Lapo's death. Old Grangioia and his three sons arrived at the Muti fortress raving for sudden vengeance. There they were joined by others, rich troubadours, backed by many lances, whose rage could not have been hotter had Lapo, that "wild beast in human form," defaced the Holy Sepulchre. At last the Marquis Azzo was forced to reflect:

"Cercamorte has served me well, but if I keep them from him our league may be torn asunder. Let them have him. But he will die hard."

Round the Big Hornets' Nest the crows were thicker than ever.

One cold, foggy evening Lapo Cercamorte at last pushed open his wife's chamber door. Madonna Gemma was alone, drapped in a fur-lined mantle, warming her hands over an earthern pot full of embers. Standing awkwardly before her, Lapo perceived that her beauty was fading away in this unhappy solitude. On her countenance was no trace of that which he had hoped to see. He swore softly, cast down from feverish expectancy into bewilderment.

"No," he said, at length, his voice huskier than usual, "this cannot continue. You are a flower transplanted into a dungeon, and dying on the stalk. One cannot refashion the past. The future remains. Perhaps you would flourish again if I sent you back to your father?"

He went to the casement with a heavy step, and stared through a rent in the oiled linen at the mist, which clung round the castle like a pall.

"Madonna," he continued, more harshly than ever, in order that she might not rejoice at his pain, "I ask pardon for the poorness of my house. Even had my sword made me wealthy, I should not have known how to provide appointments pleasing to a delicate woman. My manners also, as I have learned since our meeting, are unsuitable. The camps were my school, and few ladies came into them. It was not strange that when Raffaele Muti presented himself you should have found him more to your taste. But if on my sudden return I did what I did, and thus prevented him from boasting up and down Lombardy of another conquest, it was because I had regard not only for my honor, but for yours. So I am not asking your pardon on that score."

Lowering her face toward the red embers, she whispered:

"A beast believes all men to be beasts."

"Kiss of Judas! Are women really trapped, then, by that gibberish? Madonna, these miaowing troubadours have concocted a world that they themselves will not live in! Have I not sat swigging in tents with great nobles, and heard all the truth about it? Those fellows always have, besides the lady that they pretend to worship as inviolate, a dozen others with whom the harp-twanging stage is stale."

"All false, every word," Madonna Gemma answered.

"Because ladies choose to think so the game goes on. Well, Madonna, remember this. From the moment when I first saw you I, at least, did you no dishonor, but married you promptly, and sought your satisfaction by the means that I possessed. I was not unaware that few wives come to their husbands with affection. Certainly I did not expect affection from you at first, but hoped that it might ensue. So even Lapo Cercamorte became a flabby fool, when he met one in comparison with whom all other women seemed

mawkish. Since it was such a fit of driveling, let us put an end to it. At sunrise the horses will be ready. Good night."

Leaving her beside the dying embers, he went out upon the ramparts. The fog was impenetrable; one could not even see the light in the sorcerer's window.

"Damned Arabian!" growled Lapo, brandishing his fist. He sat down beside the gate-tower, and rested his chin on his hands.

"How cold it is," he thought, "how lonely and dismal! Warfare is what I need. Dear Lord, let me soon be killing men briskly, and warming myself in the burning streets of Ferrara. That is what I was begotten for. I have been lost in a maze."

Dawn approached, and Lapo was still dozing beside the gate-tower.

With the first hint of light the sentinel challenged; voices answered outside the gate. It was old Grangioia and his sons, calling up that they had come to visit their daughter.

"Well arrived," Lapo grunted, his brain and body sluggish from the chill. He ordered the gate swung open.

Too late, as they rode into the courtyard, he saw that there were nearly a score of them, all with their helmets on. Then in the fog he heard a noise like an avalanche—the clatter of countless steelclad men scrambling up the hillside.

While running along the wall, Lapo Cercamorte noted that the horsemen were hanging back, content to hold the gate till reinforced. On each side of the courtyard his soldiers were tumbling out of their barracks and fleeing toward the keep, that inner stronghold which was now their only haven. Dropping at last from the ramparts, he joined this retreat. But on gaining the keep he found with him only some thirty of his men; the rest had been caught in their beds.

Old Baldo gave him a coat of mail. Young Foresto brought him his sword and shield. Climbing the keep-wall,

Cercamorte squinted down into the murky courtyard. That whole place now swarmed with his foes.

Arrows began to fly. A round object sailed through the air and landed in the keep; it was the head of the Arabian.

"Who are these people?" asked Baldo, while rapidly shooting at them with a bow. "There seem to be many knights; half the shields carry devices. Ai! they have fired the barracks. Now we shall make them out."

The flames leaped up in great sheets producing the effect of an infernal noon. The masses in the courtyard, inhuman-looking in their ponderous, barrel-shaped helmets, surged forward at the keep with a thunderous outcry:

"Grangioia! Grangioia! Havoc on Cercamorte!"

"Muti! Muti! Havoc on Cercamorte!"

"God and the Monfalcone!"

"Strike for Zaladino! Havoc on Cercamorte!"

Lapo bared his teeth at them. "By the Five Wounds! half of Lombardy seems to be here. Well, my Baldo, before they make an end of us shall we show them some little tricks?"

"You have said it, Cercamorte. One more good scuffle, with a parade of all our talent."

The assailants tried beams against the keep gate; the defenders shot them down or hurled rocks upon their heads. But on the wall of the keep Cercamorte's half-clad men fell sprawling, abristle with feathered shafts. A beam reached the gate and shook it on its hinges. Lapo, one ear shot away, drew his surviving soldiers back into the hall.

He ordered torches stuck into all the wall-rings, and ranged his men on the dais. Behind them, in the doorway leading to the upper chambers and the high tower, he saw his wife, wild-looking, and whiter than her robe.

"Go back, Madonna. It is only your family calling with some of their friends. I entered Grangioia Castle abruptly; now it is tit for tat."

The crone brought two helmets, which Lapo and Baldo put on. Then, drawing their long swords, they awaited the onset.

The keep gate yielded, and into the hall came rushing a wave of peaked and painted shields. But before the dais the wave paused, since in it were those who could not forego the joy of taunting Lapo Cercamorte before killing him. So, suddenly, all his antagonists contemplated him in silence, as he crouched above them with his sword and shield half raised, his very armor seeming to emanate force, cunning, and peril.

"Foul monster!" a muffled voice shouted. "Now you come to your death!"

"Now we will give your carcass to the wild beasts, your brothers!"

"Let my daughter pass through," bawled old Grangioia; then, receiving no response, struck clumsily at Lapo.

With a twist of his sword Lapo disarmed the old man, calling out:

"Keep off, kinsman! I will not shed Grangioia blood unless you force me to it. Let Muti come forward. Or yonder gentleman dressed up in the white eagles of Este, which should hide their heads with their wings, so long and faithfully have I served them."

But none was ignorant of Cercamorte's prowess; so, after a moment of seething, they all came at him together.

The swordblades rose and fell so swiftly that they seemed to be arcs of light; the deafening clangor was pierced by the howls of the dying. The dais turned red—men slipped on it; Cercamorte's sword caught them; they did not rise. He seemed indeed to wield more swords than one, so terrible was his fighting. At his back stood Baldo, his helmet caved in, his mail shirt in ribbons, his abdomen slashed open. Both at once they saw that all their men were down. Hewing to right and left they broke through, gained the tower staircase, and locked the door behind them.

On the dark stairway they leaned against the wall, their helmets off, gasping for breath, while the enemy hammered the door.

"How is it with you?" puffed Lapo, putting his arm round Baldo's neck.

"They have wrecked my belly for me. I am finished."

Lapo Cercamorte hung his head and sobbed, "My old Baldo, my comrade, it is my folly that has killed you."

"No, no. It was only that I had survived too many tussles; then all at once our Lord recalled my case to his mind. But we have had some high times together, eh?"

Lapo, weeping aloud from remorse, patted Baldo's shoulder and kissed his withered cheek. Lamplight flooded the staircase; it was Foresto softly descending. The rays illuminated Madonna Gemma, who all the while had been standing close beside them.

"Lady," said Baldo, feebly, "can you spare me a bit of your veil? Before the door falls I must climb these steps, and that would be easier if I could first bind in my entrails."

They led him upstairs, Lapo on one side, Madonna Gemma on the other, and Foresto lighting the way. They came to the topmost chamber in the high tower—the last room of all.

Here Cercamorte kept his treasures—his scraps of looted finery, the weapons taken from fallen knights, the garrison's surplus of arms. When he had locked the door, and with Foresto's slow help braced some pike-shafts against it, he tried to make Baldo lie down.

The old man vowed profanely that he would die on his feet. Shambling to the casement niche, he gaped forth at the dawn. Below him a frosty world was emerging from the mist. He saw the ring of the ramparts, and in the courtyard the barrack ruins smoldering. Beyond, the hillside also smoked, with shredding vapors; and at the foot of the hill he observed a strange sight—the small figure of a man in tunic and hood, feylike amid the mist, that danced and made gestures of joy. Baldo, clinging to the casement-sill on

bending legs, summoned Cercamorte to look at the dancing figure.

"What is it, Lapo? A devil?"

"One of our guests, no doubt," said Cercamorte, dashing the tears from his eyes. "Hark! the door at the foot of the staircase has fallen. Now we come to our parting, old friend."

"Give me a bow and an arrow," cried Baldo, with a rattle in his throat. "Whoever that zany is, he shall not dance at our funeral. Just one more shot, my Lapo. You shall see that I still have it in me."

Cercamorte could not deny him this last whim. He found and strung a bow, and chose the Ghibelline's war-arrow. Behind them, young Foresto drew in his breath with a hiss, laid his hand on his dagger, and turned the color of clay. Old Baldo raised the bow, put all his remaining strength into the draw, and uttered a cracking shout of bliss. The mannikin no longer danced; but toward him, from the hillside, some men in steel were running. Baldo, sinking back into Cercamorte's arms, at last allowed himself to be laid down.

Through the door filtered the rising tumult of the enemy.

Lapo Cercamorte's blood-smeared visage turned businesslike. Before grasping his sword, he bent to rub his palms on the grit of the pavement. While he was stooping, young Foresto unsheathed his dagger, made a catlike step, and stabbed at his master's neck. But quicker than Foresto was Madonna Gemma, who, with a deer's leap, imprisoned his arms from behind. Cercamorte discovered them thus, struggling fiercely in silence.

"Stand aside," he said to her, and, when he had struck Foresto down, "Thank you for that, Madonna. With such spirit to help me, I might have worthy sons. Well, here they come, and this door is a flimsy thing. Get yourself into the casement niche, away from the swing of my blade."

A red trickle was running down his legs; he was standing in a red pool.

It began again, the splitting of panels, the cracking of hinges. The door was giving; now only the pike-shafts held it. Then came a pause. From far down the staircase a murmur of amazement swept upward; a babble of talk ensued. Silence fell. Cercamorte let out a harsh laugh.

"What new device is this? Does it need so much chicanery to finish one man?"

Time passed, and there was no sound except a long clattering from the courtyard. Of a sudden a new voice called through the broken door:

"Open, Cercamorte. I am one man alone."

"Come in without ceremony. Here I am, waiting to embrace you."

"I am Ercole Azzanera, the Marquis Azzo's cousin, and your true friend. I swear on my honor that I stand here alone with sheathed sword."

Lapo kicked the pike-shafts away, and, as the door fell inward, jumped back on guard. At the threshold, unhelmeted, stood the knight whose long surcoat was covered with the white eagles of Este. He spoke as follows:

"Cercamorte, this array came up against you because it was published that you had killed and flayed Raffaele Muti, and, out of jealous malignancy, were wearing his skin as a vest. But just now a marvelous thing has happened, for at the foot of the hill Raffaele Muti has been found, freshly slain by a wandered arrow. Save for that wound his skin is without flaw. Moreover, he lived and breathed but a moment ago. So the whole tale was false, and this war against you outrageous. All the gentlemen who came here have gone away in great amazement and shame, leaving me to ask pardon for what they have done. Forgive them, Cercamorte, in the name of Christ, for they believed themselves to be performing a proper deed."

And when Lapo found no reply in his head, Ercole Azzanera, with a humble bow, descended from the high tower and followed the others away.

Lapo Cercamorte sat down on a stool. "All my good men," he murmured, "and my dear gossip, Baldo! My castle rushed by so shabby a ruse; my name a laughing-stock! And the Marquis Azzo gave them my house as one gives a child a leaden gimcrack to stamp on. All because of this damned vest, this silly talisman which was to gain me her love. 'In the name of Christ,' says my friend, Ercole Azzanera. By the Same! if I live I will go away to the heathen, for there is no more pleasure in Christendom."

So he sat for a while, maundering dismally, then stood up and made for the door. He reeled. He sank down with a clash. Madonna Gemma, stealing out from the casement niche, knelt beside him, peered into his face, and ran like the wind down the staircase. In the hall, with lifted robe she sped over the corpses of Cercamorte's soldiers, seeking wine and water. These obtained, she flew back to Lapo. There the crone found her. Between them those two dragged him down to Madonna Gemma's chamber, stripped him, tended his wounds, and hoisted him into the bed.

Flat on his back, Cercamorte fought over all his battles. He quarreled with Baldo. Again he pondered anxiously outside Madonna Gemma's door. He instructed the Arabian to fashion him a charm that would overspread his ugly face with comeliness, change his uncouthness into gentility. He insisted on wearing the vest, the under side of which was scribbled with magical signs.

Madonna Gemma sat by the bed all day, and lay beside him at night. On rising, she attired herself in a vermilion gown of Eastern silk. Into her golden tresses she braided the necklaces that he had offered her. Her tapering, milky fingers sparkled with rings. Her former beauty had not returned—another, greater beauty had taken its place.

A day came when he recognized her face. Leaning down like a flower of paradise, she kissed his lips.

Reading List

Stories of Mood: Love

Bercovici, Konrad. "Fanutza," "Tinka," "Yahde, the Proud One."
Brown, Alice. "The Flight of the Mouse," "Mary Felicia."
Bunner, H. C. "A Sisterly Scheme," "The Love Letters of Smith."
Canfield, Dorothy. "A Thread Without a Knot," "From Across the Hall."
Chambers, Robert W. "Blue Bird Weather," "The Progress of Janet," "Owl's Head."
Connolly, James B. "Peter Stops Ashore."
Davis, Richard Harding. "The Red Cross Girl."
Fitzgerald, F. Scott. "The Off-Shore Pirate."
Fox, John. "A Mountain Europa."
Freeman, Mary E. Wilkins. "Amarina's Roses," "Willow-Ware," "The Joy of Youth," "The Scent of the Roses."
Garland, Hamlin. "Among the Corn Rows."
Gelzer, Jay. "The Blue Eyes of Wang Hai."
Hemmenway, Hetty. "Four Days."
Henry, O. "Best-Seller," "Hearts and Crosses," "The Indian Summer of Dry Valley Johnson."
Hurst, Fannie. "T. B."
Kipling, Rudyard. "The Courting of Dinah Shadd," "The Brushwood Boy."
Morris, Gouverneur. "Legay Pelham's Protege," "The MacTavish," "Captain England."
Pertwee, Roland. "Red and White." (*See* O'Brien, E. J., *Great Modern English Stories.*)
Rinehart, Mary Roberts. "Twenty-Two," "The Miracle," "Jane."
Smith, F. Hopkinson. "The Veiled Lady of Stamboul."
Steele, Wilbur D. "Down on Their Knees," "The White Horse Winter."
Stevenson, Robert Louis. "Sire de Maletroit's Door."
Webster, Henry K. "Heart of Gold."
Zangwill, Israel. "The Rose of the Ghetto."

THE FIGHT THAT FAILED *

By Octavus Roy Cohen

Cupid Baldon stepped back from the mirror and surveyed his reflection complacently. He gave a final reassuring pat to the cerise scarf, adjusted his near panama to the precise angle of ultra fashion, dusted his cane with an exhandkerchief, and departed.

As he strutted through the front doorway of the four-room house the two little negro boys on the veranda ceased boisterous play and stared reverently.

"Tha's him!"

"No!"

"Yeh—shuah 'nuff!"

"Not Cupid Baldon, the prize fighter?"

"Uh-huh! Tha's the ve'y man what he is."

Cupid was smiling contentedly when he reached the gate and turned down the tree-lined thoroughfare. That prize-fighter idea had been inspirational. It had given to him—a stranger—a distinction he had never before enjoyed. Cupid's sojourn in town had been a cumulation of social triumphs, justifying a rank extravagance in the matter of wardrobe. For, since he had elected to palm himself off as the *ne plus ultra* of negro middleweights, it was meet and proper that he should dress the part.

The fact that his dabbling in the realm of padded mitts and powdered resin had been confined to three hectic months as

* From *Come Seven;* copyright, 1919, by Dodd, Mead and Company. Reprinted by permission of the author and the publishers.

punching bag for and third assistant second to a fourth-rate, battered-up, broken-down pugilist in New Orleans troubled him not at all. During that epochal period he had absorbed the patter of the prize ring as a sponge absorbs water, and the ease with which it dripped from his lips lent verisimilitude to his pugilistic pretensions. Certainly he had the coloured population dancing to his tune. Nor was there anything about his physique to give the lie to his bombastic claims. He was of medium height, alarmingly thickset, and boasted a square pugnacious jaw, a broad flat nose, and narrow squinting eyes. He declaimed voluminously of his prowess and achievements. And, close as he was to the shoals of pecuniary embarrassment, he was enjoying himself to the utmost while his cash held out. Later—well, he was highly indifferent about the future. That indeterminate era had a pleasant and infallible habit of taking care of itself.

He strolled four blocks, turned in at the gate of a cozy little cottage which nestled comfortably behind carefully cultivated flower beds, mounted to the veranda and rapped on the door.

Maldonia Rouse answered in person.

Maldonia was garbed for the street in a manner that would have relegated the most radiant rainbow to pale colourless oblivion. She had permitted an amazing artistic sense to run riot in selecting the garments for her afternoon promenade with this latest social lion. She blazed with colourful glory.

Style was Maldonia's long suit. It more than atoned for the shameful neglect of her careless progenitors, who had imparted to their offspring no startling degree of pulchritude. There was a captivating *élan* about Maldonia that was decidedly more than skin-deep. She smiled roguishly.

"You is late, Cupid."

"Is I?" He shrugged indifferently.

"I ain't objectin'," she interpolated hastily, fearful of his resentment; "on'y I is been waitin' fo' a mighty long time."

"Is you?"

She smiled again.

"You is the leas'-talkin'es' man, Cupid! Le's go."

They rambled toward the centre of town, a truly resplendent couple. Maldonia's left hand rested proudly on Cupid's powerful arm. His eye caught the glitter of a diamond on the third finger.

"That a ginuwine di'min', Maldonia?"

"Shuah is!"

"Cleophus White give it to you?" His eyes narrowed slightly.

"Yeh."

"You an' him is engage', ain't you?"

"Uh-huh! We is engage'."

"To be ma'ied?"

"Suttinly not! We is on'y jes' engage'."

"Oh!" sighed Cupid, vastly relieved. "Tha's diff'ent."

Eighteenth Street was a-seethe with the activities of mid-afternoon. The three negro photoplay houses were crowded with enthusiastic patrons; crowds eddied about the doors of the Penny Prudential Bank building, the imposing office structure owned by and for negroes; drays rattled over the network of car tracks; a steady stream of automobiles honked impatiently. Lining the curb were about twoscore languid young men, idling away the hours.

Cupid perceptibly slackened pace as they reached this Mecca of the city's Afro-American populace. He was sartorially pre-eminent and welcomed comparison. He and his companion approached the New Queen Vaudeville Theatre—Coloured Only. Against the lamp-post before the ornate portal of this model temple of amusement two young men were leaning—one a large, light-brown individual, with an alarming immature moustache; the other short, slender, and excessively prosperous in appearance.

The smaller man raised his hat to Maldonia. Cupid Baldon returned the bow. The large man stared frigidly at the girl and remained motionless. Cupid stopped short, feet

spread wide, cane twirling suggestively. He addressed the angry-looking moustached individual.

"Cleophus White, I done bowed to you!"

"That so?" Cleophus raised a pair of eyes shot through with jealous green.

"Yeh," retorted Cupid, with deadly earnestness. "An' w'en I bows to a gen'leman I mos' usuamly espects him to return my bow back."

"Espects ain't does, Mistuh Baldon."

"Ise waitin' fo that bow."

Cleophus stiffened. He was thirty pounds heavier than Cupid. He opened his lips to consign the other to a region noted for the monotonous sameness of its weather reports. Then he closed his lips and raised his hat, eyes focussed on the girl.

"How you is this evenin', Miss Rouse?"

"Tol'able, Mistuh White; tol'able, thank you."

Mr. Baldon and Miss Rouse moved triumphantly on. Cleophus waited until his fiancée and her gentleman friend were safely out of earshot and then exploded with classic profanity. Florian Slappey patiently heard him through. "You is shuah some elegant cusser, Cleophus."

Cleophus immediately eclipsed all past performances.

"If'n you feel that way 'bout it," suggested Florian pertinently, "whyn't you bust him one?"

"Huh! Swell chancet I got 'gainst a prefessional fighter."

"Reckon you is thutty poun's heavier'n what he is."

"Thutty poun's don't do no good if'n he cain't be hit. Besides, you know I ain't no fightin' man. Never has been."

"No-o; I ain't reckon you is."

The silence that ensued was long. Florian Slappey terminated it:

"Bet you is thinkin'."

"I is."

"'Bout Cupid Baldon?"

"Him an' Maldonia. Flo'ian, that gal is doin' me dirt!"

"She shuah ain't lovin' you to death; an' that ain't no lie. Had a fuss?" Florian grinned.

"No. It's jes' Cupid Baldon. That nigger is plumb went to her haid."

"Don't you go worryin' 'bout that, Cleophus; she ain't nothin' on'y a gal."

"Yeh—an' he ain't nothin' on'y a man; an' they's a heap of trouble been caused in this heah worl' on account of gals an' men."

"I wouldn't let no wimmin go worryin' me, Cleophus. They's hell when they stahts."

"But s'posin' you was engage' to Maldonia?"

"I ain't."

"But if'n you was?"

"We-e-e-ell, if'n I was engage' to Maldonia, an' she was runnin' roun' premiscusslike with a prize fighter like what she is doin' with this heah Cupid Baldon, I reckon I'd jes' nacherly fix him."

"How?"

"They's ways." Florian waved his hand airily.

"Which ways?"

"Gimme time to think. . . . Reckon he could git licked, coul'n't he?"

"Not by no man in this town."

"S'mother town, then."

"Reckon so. But that don't answer me nothin'. What I is interes' in is what happens to him heah. Maldonia thinks he is the greates' fighter in the worl', an' he could git knocked to Kingdom Come an' back again somewheres else an' come back an' smooth things over with her with jes' a few sof' lies."

"Then," said Florian positively, "you is got to git him licked right heah."

"Ain't I done tol' you, Flo'ian——"

But Florian was thinking and Cleophus fell silent. Finally the smaller man smiled broadly.

"Cleophus, is it wuth a hund'ed dollars to you to remove Cupid away from Maldonia?"

Cleophus gazed scornfully upon his friend.

"A hund'ed dollars! Shucks! That ain't nothin' on'y a baggytelle against how much I wan's to see that fo'flushin' prize fighter git his'n."

"An' you is shuah Maldonia ain't on'y lovin' him on account he's such a good fighter?"

"Tha's it—that, an' 'cause all the gals is crazy 'bout'n him; an' it sort of goes to a gal's haid when a man which all the other gals wan's picks her out."

"S'posin'," suggested Florian happily— "s'posin' we could git this heah Cupid Baldon to make too much talk with his mouf 'bout'n he c'n lick any man of his weight in the worl', an' then git a real fust-class fighter down heah an' lick him —lick him reg'lar—Markis of Queensberry rules, an' all that? S'posin' that was to be—reckon Maldonia'd git sore at him an' th'ow him over?"

"S'posin'," returned Cleophus mournfully— "s'posin' I should inherit a million dollars, an' ev'ybody knowed I wan'ed to give a lot of it away on account I got a kin' heart; reckon I'd have much trouble findin' fellers which would take some? You is a good feller, Flo'ian, an' you knows heaps 'bout'n some things; but prize fighters ain't one of them things, Flo'ian—'cause you don't know nothin' a-tall whatever 'bout'n them."

"I wa'n't on'y s'posin'."

"You is the indisputed chapeen s'posiner, Flo'ian. Yo' plan ain't no good a-tall, however, Flo'ian, fo' the simple reason that it's rotten. An', 'sides, they don't 'low no prize fightin' in Alabama."

"Don't 'low ain't got nothin' to do with the plan I got," responded Florian with dignity. "But if'n you is shuah I ain't got no sense——" And he turned sadly away.

"That ain't it," pleaded his friend earnestly. "On'y I is a wo'ied man, Flo'ian; an' all I asts you is when you talks to

me please try an' talk a li'l sense. I says thiswise: If they ain't 'low prize fighting, how you gwine git Cupid licked heah?"

"'Tain't gwine be no prize fight."

"You is 'bout as clear as coal dust, Flo'ian." Cleophus threw up his hands.

"Lemme splain." Florian's face broke into a broad, engaging grin. Explaining pet schemes was Florian's hobby, and he rode it verbosely and often. "They ain't no law gwine intumfere with this heah lickin' what Cupid Baldon is gwine git, on account they ain't no law in Alabama which says chu'ch members cain't box each other if'n they is on a picnic which the chu'ch gives."

Cleophus was still dazed.

"I reckon that is a elegant scheme you got, Flo'ian; but I ain't been heahin' nothin' 'bout no chu'ch picnic."

"Nor neither I ain't—yet."

"But if'n they ain't gwine be none——"

"Who says they ain't?"

"But——" Cleophus grabbed frantically for his wispy moustache.

"They is gwine be one."

"Which chu'ch?"

"I ain't shuah yet. Mos' prob'ly either the Fust African M. E. or the Primitive Baptis', on account both Rev'en' Plato Tubb an' Rev'en' Arlandas Sipsey, which pastorizes them chu'ches, is got lib'al views. Thing is this: I is gwine make talk with Rev'en' Plato Tubb, fust off, an' tell him to git up a picnic out to Blue Lake Pahk; an' the big feature is gwine be a athaletic ca'nival—wras'lin' an' baseball an' runnin', an' sechlike. An' the plumb biggest thing'll be a sparrin' match. Rev'en' Tubb'll fall fo' it—or, if'n he don't, Rev'en' Arlandas Sipsey will. Whichever one does will go to Cupid Baldon an' ast him will he box a exumbition fo' sweet cha'ity, on account all them proceeds is gwine to the chu'ch.

"Co'se, right off, Cupid'll want to know who he is gwine

box with; an' Rev'en' Tubb ain't gwine tell him. 'Oh, jes' some local amachure!' he'll say. An' Cupid'll think it's a swell way he c'n show off befo' Maldonia, on account ladies will be there; an' he'll say yes, cause'n they ain't no man in town he cain't lick if'n they's near the same weight.

"It's gwine look like a imformal thing to him an' up to the day of the picnic he ain't gwine be wo'ied. An' he'll go boastin' roun' 'bout'n what he's gwine do to the other feller. Well, I an' you will write to Jockey Spider Hawkins, which is ridin' up to Latonia now, an' ast him to git us a high-class nigger fighter from over in Cinsnati fo' sevumty-five dollars an' espenses; an' then, jes' befo' the picnic, we is gwine let ev'ybody know 'bout'n this swell fighter which is comin' heah to lick Cupid.

"Co'se all the menfolks will on'erstan' right off quick that it's gwine be a real fight an' not no sparrin' exumbition; an' they'll all buy tickets an' make the picnic a big success. Then, if Cupid ain't all what he says he is, an' gits skeered, he'll leave heah absotively an' ontirely—which'll fix things all right 'tween you an' Maldonia. But if Cupid stays an' fights he'll git licked so bad they won't be nothin' lef' of him—on'y th'ee grunts an' a wiggle."

Florian placed well-manicured hands on slender hips and surveyed his friend triumphantly. He was infinitely pleased with himself as a schemer, and was particularly enamoured of that portion of his scheme which cast the unsuspecting Tubb in the rôle of prize-fight promoter.

"Now, Cleophus, what you got to say 'bout'n my plan?"

Solemnly Cleophus White reached for the right hand of his friend. He crushed it in a grip of devout friendship.

"Flo'ian," he orated, "when a man is got a frien' like what you is he don't need nothin' mo'n on'y th'ee meals a day to be the happies' man what is. When you gwine staht off with this heah picnic talk?"

"Now!" retorted Florian pridefully. "They is a ol' an' true sayin', Cleophus: 'They ain't nothin' like a present'!"

It took just fifteen minutes of adjectival monologue to wind up all arrangements with the Reverend Plato Tubb, of the First African M. E. Church. Florian found the reverend gentleman beautifully responsive. Reverend Tubb constitutionally favoured anything which savoured of an inflated treasury, and his clerical mind did not sprout the suspicion that there might be something more to the scheme than mere altruism.

"Is you gwine 'range it?" he asked.

Florian smiled a broad, disarming smile.

"Nossuh, Rev'en' Tubb; you is gwine make all the 'rangements. Co'se I'll he'p with the details. They's this heah Cupid Baldon——"

"The prize fighter?" Reverend Tubb elevated his hands in pious horror.

"Tha's which. If'n you asts him he is gwine do it. Jes' a li'l sciumtific sparrin' match—see? Co'se he'll do it fo' nothin', on account it's fo' cha'ity. You go an' tell him heah's a good chance to show all the folks heahabouts what a fine boxer he is—'thout gittin' into nothin' like a fight. Right off he's gwine ast you who is he gwine spar with, an' you'll say you don't know—jes' any feller which we happens to pick up out to the picnic."

"But s'posin' they ain't nobody willin' to box with him?" queried the practical Plato.

"Somebody will!"

"But s'posin——"

Florian had an inspiration.

"'Tween you an' I, Rev'en' Tubb, Cleophus White is strong fo' this picnic on account he loves the Fust African M. E. Chu'ch so much; an' he said I should tell you he'd do it hiss'f if'n you coul'n't git no one else. Co'se you is got to make Brother Baldon promise sacred he ain't gwine hu't who we git to box with him, him bein' a prefessional an' who boxes with him nothin' on'y a amachure. On'erstan'?"

Reverend Plato Tubb understood. So did Cupid Baldon. Plato made him understand. Between interviews with Flor-

ian Slappey and Cupid Baldon, the Reverend Plato had allowed his enthusiasm to expand. He had become a zealous worker in behalf of the proposed picnic and athletic carnival. So he painted in glowing colours the glorious potentialities of the situation for Cupid. Cupid, after all, was the chief attraction; and Cupid's consent was all that was needed to insure the success of the undertaking. In outlining the plan Reverend Tubb—never one to go out of his way for the purpose of giving credit to another—refrained from mentioning the fact that the idea for the boxing bout had originated in the fertile brain of Florian Slappey, or that Florian was the bosom friend of Cleophus White, the faintly moustached gentleman whose fiancée was the root of the turmoil.

Cupid fell. He fell even though he was, at the outset, leery of the proposition. Cupid was not a fighter. He had never in his life stepped into a ring save on the rare occasions when the broken-down boxer whom he had seconded conscripted him as human punching bag under the high-sounding title of sparring partner.

It was the offhand manner in which the Reverend Plato informed him that his opponent was to be "Jes' some man what we picks up out to Blue Lake Pahk" which did the work. Cupid realized that he knew just enough about boxing to insure his own safety in such a match. Win or not, he could at least cover and stall through six rounds with any amateur. He was vastly relieved by the Reverend Tubb's exaction of a promise that the affair was to be a sparring match for points and not to savour in any way of a battle.

It was all meat for Cupid. Should the bout prove a fiasco, he felt that he could alibi himself excellently by his promise to a gentleman of the cloth that he would inflict no damage upon his luckless opponent. He also intended to see to it that his adversary was given similar instructions.

The plan seemed burglar proof. Cupid knew he had built for himself a fearsome reputation as a vicious fighter. And, so far as he knew, there wasn't another man in the city who

understood the elementary rules of the noble art of self-defence. More—he banked strongly upon the psychological certainty that whoever his opponent was, the gentleman would enter the ring with an abiding respect for the professional.

And there was Maldonia to be considered. Cupid envisioned himself the victor in a flashy innocuous sparring match. He knew he was adored by the fair Maldonia largely because of her implicit faith in his tales of fistic achievement. From Cupid's standpoint the scheme was flawless; he stood to win great luscious gobs of glory without the slightest danger to himself or his reputation.

He accepted. He did so condescendingly, as a movie actor shakes hands with a mere playwright. The Reverend Plato was delighted. More so was Florian Slappey. And most so was Cleophus White.

Florian laboriously indited a letter to Jockey Spider Hawkins, then at Latonia. Three days later he received an answer:

Der bruther Florian:

I was sur glad to here from you yestday I went out at wunce and found just the man you want wich is a fin midelwait fiter name nockout dixy he is a fine fiter and will get thare 6 oclok trane mornin of the 15 wich you say is the picnic and I am shur he will nock hel out of this cupid baldon wich you rights me about and I shur hope he does and I got him for fifty dollars (50) and espensis I no that is alrite and right me about how the fite comes out becos this nockout dixy is sum class and you can bet your mony on him with lov to all and tell all of the boys helo for me I am yures truley—

JOCKEY SPIDER HAWKINS.

Meantime Cupid Baldon had been industriously digging his own grave. All previous boastings faded to a pale pink by comparison with his latest surge of self-adulation. Cupid was a firm believer in the art of personal press-agentry. Within two days he had every man and woman in coloured circles weeping sad salt tears for the prospective victim.

As for Maldonia, she fell more deeply than ever under the mesmeric spell of his everflowing speech. At last she was to see this nonpareil engaged in the practice of his profession. For the sake of her tender sensibilities, he promised that he would not annihilate his opponent. He agreed to give a delicate exhibition of gentle sparring. And the more he talked, the more confident he became. The whole town listened and waxed wildly enthusiastic. Tickets for the picnic sold like hot cakes.

Cleophus and Florian waited patiently to explode their bomb until they were quite sure Cupid had hopelessly entangled himself in the web of his own boasting. Cleophus made no attempt to insinuate himself into the immediate vicinity of the divine Maldonia. He went quietly about his business with a bland, satisfied smile decorating his modestly moustached face.

The night before the picnic Florian and Cleophus trailed Cupid and Maldonia to the Gold Crown Ice-Cream Parlour. That soft-drink dispensary was crowded. March Clisby, long and lanky and eternally smiling, achieved the impossible behind the fountain, concocting creamy, fizzy, foamy drinks with lightning speed and mastered art. Corena, his fair young wife, presided in the cashier's cage. Small boys darted hither and thither through the good-natured crowd, serving the orders and collecting therefor. There was an audible hush as the hero of the morrow entered with Maldonia on his arm. They seated themselves at an empty table midway of the soft-drink emporium.

The chatter was again stilled as Florian entered with the fiancé of Cupid's lady friend. Cleophus and Florian deliberately selected seats at a table with Doctor and Mrs. Atcherson—a table next to that at which Cupid and Maldonia sat.

Cleophus dignifiedly ignored his fiancée and her loud-mouthed escort. Maldonia's nose tilted ceilingward. Cupid Baldon pounded on the table top with a hamlike fist and bellowed through the store:

"Boy, you ain't took our orders till yet!"

Conversation did not again become general. All eyes were focussed on the centre two tables; all ears were strained for some word hinting trouble.

But trouble seemed afar off. Apparently Cleophus had never been more happy or carefree. He chatted volubly with the negro surgeon and his extremely ample wife, casually discussing topics of the day. It was Doctor Atcherson who fired the innocent question for which Cleophus had been angling:

"Shuah I is goin' to the picnic tomorrow. It ought to be a good success."

"Success is right!" answered Florian quickly. "They jes' ain't no other name fo' it!"

"Who," inquired the doctor blandly, "is gwine box with Brother Cupid Baldon?"

Florian concealed a grin with difficulty. He glanced covertly at the fighter and saw that be-jawed individual leaning forward intently.

"Ain't you heard?" he temporized.

"No."

"'Twas thisaway," explained the dapper little schemer: "They wa'n't a man in this heah town would box with Brother Baldon; an' we di'n't know which to do—on'y so happened it that luck played right into our han's."

"What you mean—luck?"

"Well, I is got a frien' up Cinsnati which knows sumthin' 'bout scientific boxin', an' it jes' happen' so he was comin' th'oo t'morrow on his way to N'Yawleens. So I ast him would he stop over as a favour to me an' he'p out by sparrin' a li'l' with Brother Baldon; an' he says shuah he will. He'll be in on the six o'clock A. M. train t'morrow mawnin'."

"No! Not a reg'lar fighter?"

"One of the bestes middleweights what they is."

"No!"

"Yeh!"

The squinty eyes of the skinny little doctor were glowing with anticipatory joy.

"Mebbe——"

Florian winked. He leaned forward and whispered confidentially to the doctor; but not so confidentially that his words failed to carry several tables distant:

"Co'se, bein' as the chu'ch is gittin' it up, 'twoul'n't do to say nothin' right out loud; but whenever real prefessional fighters git together they ain't gwine be no sof' an' fancy sparrin' pulled."

"Wha's the name of this fighter which is comin' in t'morrow mawnin'?" queried Atcherson.

"His name"—Florian chuckled—"his name is Knockout Dixie!"

Unconsciously Cupid Baldon grunted audibly. Into his mind there flashed vivid memory of a certain evening in Memphis—his fighting boss in the ring with the celebrated Knockout Dixie. The gong sounded for round one. There was a scrapping of feet, a fusillade of padded mitts, and Cupid Baldon had leaped wildly into the ring to help tote his entirely unconscious employer to a malodorous dressing room.

If there was one middleweight whom Cupid Baldon held in abiding respect, that man was Knockout Dixie. Knockout bore a well-deserved *nom de guerre,* and Cupid envisioned himself dragged from the ring, limp and lachrymose, after a single punch.

He rose abruptly and fairly dragged Maldonia from the Gold Crown. His air of braggadocio had departed.

"I ain't feelin' so awful good," he answered Maldonia's question. Florian saw, understood, and winked portentously at Cleophus.

The news spread like wildfire. After all the boxing match was to be a regular six-round fight. The great Cupid Baldon was going to mix things with the even greater Knockout Dixie, the Nashville phenom. There was a grand eleventh-hour

rush for tickets. And finally a coterie of the *cognoscenti* cornered Florian and Cleophus.

"Is that on the level 'bout'n Knockout Dixie comin' heah to fight Cupid Baldon?"

"Uh-huh! Jes' stoppin' over fo' that pretickeler purpose."

"How come him to do that?"

"Jes' happen so." Florian grinned broadly.

"Haw! Reckon maybe Cleophus White ain't knowin' nothin' 'bout it—huh?"

Cleophus' six feet of massive height shook with merriment. He pulled at his near moustache affectionately.

"How come you to sispec' I got a han' in bringin' Knockout Dixie heah?"

"'Cause Cupid is been runnin' roun' with yo' gal—tha's why! But the p'int is, Cleophus: Is you shuah he is gwine tu'n up t'morrow?"

"Jes' shuah's hell's made fo' bad niggers."

"An' if'n we bets an' he don't come?"

"Huh!" boasted Cleophus grandiloquently. "If'n Knockout Dixie ain't git heah t'morrow mawnin' I gwine see that Cupid Baldon gits licked in the afternoon if'n I is got to do it my own se'f!"

Dr. Brutus Herring, D. D. S., pushed his big frame through the eager crowd. Large as he was, he was shorter by an inch and lighter by ten pounds than Cleophus.

"Is you mean that, Brother White?"

Cleophus, secure in the belief that he could rely on Jockey Spider Hawkins, met Herring's eyes squarely.

"Shuah I means it!"

"You mean," persisted Herring, intent on fastening the other down to a statement he could not dodge later—"you mean that if'n anything' should go wrong an' Knockout Dixie don't git heah, you is gwine fight Cupid Baldon yo' own se'f?"

"Positively!"

Dr. Brutus Herring faced the crowd triumphantly.

"You-all heah that, gen'lemen: Cleophus is promise' sacred that he is gwine fight Cupid Baldon if'n this other gen'leman don't git heah." A roar of spontaneous approval rose heavenward. Much as the assemblage was licking its chops at the prospect of a bout between two famous professionals, it was even more desirous of seeing the rivals in the roped arena together. Grudge fights have a delicious savagery that mere money cannot purchase.

"They ain't no reason you cain't lick Cupid Baldon," commented Herring reflectively. "You is at least thutty poun's heavier, an' you is strong like a ox."

Cleophus shrugged impatiently.

"Don't make no diff'ence 'bout'n me. The p'int is that Knockout Dixie is gwine be heah; an' time he finishes with ol' Cupid Baldon that man ain't gwine know nothin' 'ceptin' on'y how angels looks."

"Tha's all well an' good," retorted Herring. "All I wan'ed to be shuah of is that they is gwine be a fight."

"They'll be a scrap, shuah nuff," reassured the exalted Cleophus, "pervidin' on'y that Cupid don't git a 'tack of col' feet an' beat it back to N'Yawleens, from where he come from."

Meantime the sadly perturbed Cupid was escorting Maldonia to her home. His naturally sluggish brain was hitting on all six cylinders. He was realizing poignantly that he had fallen into an extremely neat trap. Content in the knowledge that he knew sufficient about sparring to outpoint any raw impersonal amateur in a friendly six-round match, he had been hoist by the petard of his own fondness for the spotlight. He had been entirely too anxious to display his professional wares for the delectation of Maldonia.

During the early part of the walk Cupid was entirely silent. What talking was done emanated from Maldonia. Cupid was speculating gloomily on the dull grey aspect of

the morrow. He knew he had about as much chance with Knockout Dixie as a gelatin chicken in a rainstorm.

The first solution to the dilemma that presented itself was a prompt exodus, with himself as the exoduster; but sentimental and practical arguments prevailed against it. In the first and most important place, he was broke. For a long time he had been skating on dangerously thin ice, maintaining a sort of credit by his imposing front.

It was quite impossible to question the commercial rating of a hauteur such as his; but it was pecuniarily out of the question for him to attempt a long journey, and a short one promised to do him little good. His immediate need was for cash and plenty of it.

The idea of separating himself from Maldonia didn't cause him any particular worry. There had been great satisfaction, of course, in monopolizing the girl who wore the blazing engagement ring of the large and handsome Cleophus White. Cupid had instinctively disliked Cleophus at the outset; he resented Cleophus' too carefully nourished moustache. And Cupid had little real affection for Cleophus' fiancée. Her open idolatry of his cosmopolitanism tickled his vanity; but matrimony had never wrinkled his brow.

He thought, then, of Knockout Dixie, and reflected sadly that by the sunset of another day all illusions Maldonia might yet retain concerning his fistic prowess would be thoroughly and permanently shattered.

He envisaged the inevitable culmination of the sanguinary encounter—himself sleeping peacefully on the canvas while Knockout Dixie towered triumphantly above him, and Cleophus White beaming pridefully and possessively upon the reclaimed Maldonia. He held no false hopes as to the lady in the case; once he was dethroned, it was a certainty that she would return promptly to her first true love.

Obviously it was Cupid's cue for action.

He racked his brain for the answer and found it flashing in his troubled eyes.

He was certain to lose. He had reconciled himself to the fact that, since flight was impossible, he must climb into the ring and meekly extend his jaw for a single soporific punch. But he, alone of those in the city, knew for a certainty just what the termination of the bout would be. There were many who thought he was due to be knocked out; but only he—Cupid Baldon—knew it! It was a sure-thing bet.

Cupid Baldon chuckled. Maldonia glanced up quickly.

"What you is laughin' 'bout, Cupid?"

"Huh?"

"You done laughed right out loud."

"Did I? Reckon it was 'cause I been thinkin' what a s'prise this heah Knockout Dixie is gwine git t'morrow."

"What you mean—s'prise?"

"He thinks he is gwine lick me."

"No!"

"Yeh! An' I was jes' laughin', thinkin' of his face w'en I lan's my ol', trusty, haymak', sho't-arm right hook to the jaw an' he goes down fo' 'bout 'leven counts. Why, when I finishes with that man, Maldonia—they is gwine haf to scrape him up in a shovel! When I hits him I is gwine jar his gran-children."

"Shuah you is!" she affirmed loyally. "I'll bet you is gwine squish him right."

"Squish it is! I is gwine sink my fis' so hahd in his stummick they is gwine haf to pull it out with a derrick—on'y——" He paused and a profound lugubriosity supplanted the grin that had lightened his face for a few brief moments. "It's a downright pity!"

"What?"

"That I can't go bet on myse'f. I is losin' the easies' money I is ever made by that. You see, Maldonia, I done loant my las' five hund'ed dollars out to a frien' in N'Yawleens las' week what wrote me fo' it to buy a autymobile; an' ontil he pays me back—which ain't till day after t'morrow—Ise pow'ful sho't of cash money."

"What you need with money?"

"I reckon some of you wimminfolks is been fooled, Maldonia, into thinkin' this wa'n't gwine be nothin' on'y jes a frien'ly sparrin' match. But, 'tween I an' you, Maldonia, folks which thinks that is plumb foolish in they haids. Yo' fiansay—that big lummix of a Cleophus White—is the one which is bringin' Knockout Dixie heah, thinkin' he c'n lick me. An' they's plenty which is foolish 'nuff to 'gree with him an' bet money on it.

"Now I is tellin' you the Gowd's truth, Maldonia—they ain't on'y gwine be two blows struck in that fight: I is gwine hit that nigger an' he's gwine hit the floor. That's all! Phooey! Jes' like that. An', seein' as that's the case, I is been thinkin' it's so't of a daw-gawn shame I ain't got no money to bet on myse'f."

Maldonia cogitated intensively. The eyes of Cupid Baldon rested yearningly upon the scintillant brilliance of her engagement ring.

"If'n I on'y had some frien's who'd loant me a li'l money fo' jes' on'y twen'y-four hours——"

"If'n I had some——" faltered Maldonia weakly.

" 'Tain't like bettin'," pursued the would-be fighter. "Bettin' is takin' a chance; an' the on'y chance you is takin' this way is how quick you c'lect yo' winnin's. It's the same as findin' money. Co'se I woul'n't borry from you."

"Yes, you would," flared the mercenary Maldonia; "cause'n I'd make you. An' then I an' you could split the profits."

Cupid's brow cleared. His face broke into a radiant smile, as though she had presented a unique and brilliant suggestion.

"Daw-gawn! That makes it diff'ent—don't it?—if I an' you is splittin' the winnin's. So, if'n you puts it on a business basicks, like what it ought to got to be——"

"On'y I ain't got no money," she wailed.

"Yes, you is." He leaned confidently closer.

"Ain't."

"Is."

"Which?"

"That they ring!"

She flashed a startled glance at the ring.

"That'd be doin' Cleophus kind of a dirty trick, woul'n't it?" she queried, a bit doubtful of her ethical basis.

"Huh! He woul'n't even know nothin' 'bout it. He ain't hangin' roun' you much these days anyway. Mos' prob'ly he don't love you no mo'. An', besides, 'tain't like you was givin' the ring away. You could raise sixty dollars on that ring easy; an' by the time Cleophus an' that uppity li'l shrimp, Flo'ian Slappey, gits finished with makin' talk they is all gwine be willin' to bet they money on Knockout Dixie. An' it'd be like findin' sixty dollars. Then you'd have yo' ring back an' thutty dollars besides—an' they is some pow'ful han'some clothes c'n be bought fo' thutty dollars."

Maldonia hesitated. She desired to make the venture, but was afraid. They argued the matter pro and con before the soft insinuations of Cupid won her over. When he parted from her half an hour later the ring was tucked snugly in his vest pocket and he was streaking it at record-breaking speed for a very liberal money lender with whom he was well acquainted.

The loan man stood for a seventy-dollar touch on the ring. Cupid Baldon left his sanctum feeling as happy as a man can feel who has the bitter-sweet knowledge that he is destined to receive a horrible beating and seventy dollars the following day. Cupid had abandoned all thought of refusing the battle; he knew the temper of his recently made friends and he understood full well that he was scheduled for the receiving end of violence—if not at the hands of Knockout Dixie, then from his erstwhile friends. And he preferred the scientific brand, with all the mercy extended by Marquis of Queensberry rules.

He made his way to Bud Peaglar's Barbecue Lunch Room and Billiard Parlor, and peered through the fog of cigarette

smoke. Bud Peaglar himself bustled forward officiously to greet the distinguished guest. There was a let-down in the din and the clicking of the ivory balls ceased temporarily. Following Bud came a score or more of fight fans, who clustered about the pair. Bud spoke:

"Evenin', Mistuh Baldon."

"Lo, Bud! How's tricks?"

"Fine an' dandy! Lookin' fo' some one?"

"Yeh."

"Which?"

"Boston Marble."

"Jackson Ramsay's bettin' agent?"

"Uh-huh!"

"What you wan's with him?"

"Huh! What you reckon I wan's? I wan's to place sevumty dollars which says I is gwine knock eve'lastin' tar outen this heah Knockout Dixie."

"No!" Bud Peaglar's eyes popped.

"Yeh!"

"You is bettin' sevumty dollars you is gwine beat Knockout Dixie?"

Cupid ostentatiously produced a large roll.

"Heah's the sevumty. Ev'y cent of that says I wins by a knockout."

"My Lawd! But he's a awful bad fighter, Mistuh Baldon."

"The badder they comes, the better I likes 'em, Brother Peaglar. I ain't never yet met 'em so bad they won't flop we'n my right hook tickles they jaw. I ain't use' that sho't-arm hook ve'y often, because they's plumb danger that the man what I hits is gwine qualify right prompt an' sudden fo' tenor in a heavumly quartet. An' this heah sevumty dollars backs them words."

A youngster by the door emitted a shrill squawk:

"Yonder goes Boston Marble 'crost the street."

Cupid and Bud Peaglar started for the door.

"I'll call him," volunteered the interested Peaglar.

"Never mind!" negatived Cupid, and darted across the broad busy thoroughfare. He linked his arm through Boston's and they strolled northward on Eighteenth Street. . . . "I been inquirin' 'bout'n you, Boston," opened Cupid.

The melancholy agent for Jackson Ramsay's lottery turned fishy eyes upon his companion.

"Thet so?"

"Yeh; an' they say you is pow'ful tight-lipped."

"Thet so?"

"An' that if'n you gits money to bet, you bets it like what you is tol', an' don't say nothin' to nobody 'bout'n it."

"Thet so?"

"My Lawd! Cain't you say nothin' on'y 'Thet so'?"

"Reckon so."

"Well, heah's the idee, Boston: Co'se you knows all 'bout this fight I is gwine have t'morrow with Knockout Dixie, don't you?"

"Reckon so."

"I wan's you to take this heah sevumty dollars; keep five fo' yo' c'mission an' bet the sixty-five. But the way you is to bet that sixty-five, Boston, is that I gits licked!"

Boston's sadly drooping eyelids flickered with an almost human quiver of interest.

"Say it again."

"You is to bet that sixty-five dollars against me! Git that? You is to bet that I is gwine lose! You is to bet that I gits knocked out! An' you ain't to say nothin' to nobody 'bout how I is bettin'—on'erstan'?"

"Reckon so. Thet all?" Boston gulped.

"That's all. Shuah you on'erstan'?"

"Reckon so. G'by!"

"G'by!" And then, as the elongated betting agent flapped mournfully out of earshot, Cupid added: "You po' misguided fish!"

At five o'clock the following morning, even before a clear sunrise gave promise of a perfect day for the picnic, Cleophus

White and Florian Slappey were at the station to meet the train from Cincinnati. The train puffed under the shed strictly according to schedule. A heavy-eyed crowd streamed out of the coloured coach and through the exit gates. But in the crowd there was no Mister Knockout Dixie; nor was there any man who might by any flight of imagination have been mistaken for a professional fighter.

Cleophus' eyes met Florian's and between them flashed a startled wireless. Cleophus had a sudden sickening idea that he had trusted Spider Hawkins not wisely but too well. He seized Florian by the arm and the two men got busy. They circulated through the crowd and quizzed a score of the coloured gentry who had made the trip southward from the Ohio metropolis. The more they questioned, the more convinced they became that Mr. Dixie was not only not on the train but that he never had been.

The eyes of the two men met again—sadly. The defection of the fighting gentleman was cataclysmal. They chorused a tirade against the missing fighter and his jockey sponsor. Then, sick at heart, they retraced their steps to Florian's office, where they found a telegram:

On account broken arm nockout dixie canot leave to arive for fight. Too late to get sumbody else. Tuff luck!

JOCKEY SPIDER HAWKINS.

The door opened and Dr. Brutus Herring, followed by half a dozen fight-crazy friends in all their glory of picnic garb, entered.

"Where Knockout Dixie is at?"

Mournfully Florian extended the telegram. Gloom descended over the gathering. Only Doctor Herring smiled. And then he spoke, eyes focussed steadily on the massive muscular figure of Cleophus White.

"You is got to fight him!"

Cleophus shied nervously. Certain as he had been that

Cupid would crumple before the viciously professional onslaught of Knockout Dixie, just so certain was he that if he entered the ring with Cupid he might save his friends the annoyance of selecting a tombstone by personally attending to that detail in advance. He pulled nervously at the wisp of hair on his upper lip.

"I ain't no fighter," he negatived.

A wild wolf-pack yell went up from the assemblage:

"You promised if'n Knockout Dixie di'n't git heah you'd fight him yo' own se'f!"

"I—I—I wa'n't on'y jokin'."

"Jokin' don't go with us. We is paid our money to see a fight, an' we is gwine see one if'n we have to th'ow you into the ring. Ain't it so, Doctor Herring?"

"Right you is!"

"You is thutty poun's heavier'n what he is, Cleophus, an' they ain't no reason why you cain't lick him."

"He's a prefessional."

"You promised," grated Brutus Herring; "an' you is jes' nacherly got to fight."

Cleophus had built a Frankenstein's monster. He glanced wildly at the stern set faces of those he had accounted friends and found nary a hint of mercy. He had pledged himself. More—he had luridly proclaimed that if he should fight Cupid Baldon he would treat him even more roughly than Knockout Dixie would have done. He vainly regretted his empty boastings, mouthed when the possibility of Knockout's defection had not occurred to him. He hadn't left himself a single loophole. Of course he could flatly refuse—and forever lose caste. As for Maldonia, she would be irrecoverably lost to him.

"I'd mos' prob'ly git licked," he said weakly.

"Gittin' licked ain't no disgrace," retorted the dentist cheeringly. "Heaps of better men than what you is got licked by Cupid Baldon."

Such philosophy was poor consolation for the distraught

Cleophus. He reflected with morbid satisfaction that he was paid up on his dues in the Over the River Burying Society, and that as Past Grand Royal Monarch of the Torchbearers of Glory, Council Number Ten, he would receive a regal funeral, led by the lodge's drill team in full parade regalia and a band of music. But he had an unpleasant hunch that personally he would not enjoy the obsequies.

"As I was sayin', 'tain't no disgrace to git licked," reiterated the dentist.

An idea came to Cleophus—an idea begotten of Brutus Herring's words. There was no disgrace in defeat. Very well, he would play the rôle of martyr; he would climb into the ring and assume a bold front. He would strut to the centre, shake hands, and wait for a blow to land. And when it landed—kerflop!—he'd go down and out; an honourable defeat before a foe whose profession was fighting.

"'Tain't that Ise scared," he remarked thoughtfully.

"Co'se you ain't scared! You c'n lick him easy. You is said so yo'se'f; an' you is got plenty cause."

"Shuah! I c'n lick him—easy."

"Trouble with you," sizzled Doctor Herring, "is that you ain't got no confumdence. I is got a pow'ful strong hunch this heah Cupid Baldon ain't nothin' on'y a big-mouthed fo'-flusher. You is thutty poun's heavier an' a heap stronger. An' sencet you is got to fight him anyways——"

At nine o'clock the melancholy Boston Marble had another visitor.

"Mawnin', Mistuh White."

"Mawnin', Brother Marble. How you is feelin'?"

"Tol'able."

"I is got a mission fo' you, Brother Marble. Co'se you won't say no repeats to nobody 'bout'n what I is sayin' to you?"

"Reckon not."

"You know"—nervously—"Tempus Attucks, what hel' yo' job befo' you got it, was a pow'ful loose talker."

"Tempus Attucks is flew."

"Heah's the how of it: I is soht of got my foot into sumthin'; an', 'tween I an' you, I is in bad. To brief things up: Knockout Dixie ain't showed up an' the picnic is jes' fixin' to staht out fo' Blue Lake Pahk. An' they is brought a heap of persuasion to bear that I is got to fight Cupid Baldon. On'erstan'?"

"Reckon so."

"I ain't got no mo' chance with this heah Cupid Baldon, which is a prefessional fighter, than what a baked ham is got with a hongry nigger. An', sencet I got to take a lickin', I says to myse'f I might's well make sumthin' outen it. So I got sevumty-five dollars heah which I wants you to bet fo' me; and you bet it that Cupid Baldon wins this heah fight. See?

"I see."

"Co'se they ain't gwine be nothin' said 'bout'n how I bet, is they? I c'n trus' you?"

"Reckon so."

Cleophus departed, slightly solaced by the knowledge that, since he must be whipped, he stood to make seventy-five dollars—minus commission—on the deal. And he knew that he could trust Boston Marble to keep his secret. Saying nothing and saying it frequently was Boston's specialty.

Cleophus' money was placed with the betting agent under instructions to place it against himself. He was beset with a sudden gnawing doubt. He bethought himself that there was no one in the city willing to bet that he would win. That being the case, his money would not be covered and he should take his beating without financial reward.

What he did not know was that, at that very moment, Boston Marble was sadly and conscientiously making two transfers in his ledger. According to his record as agent, Cleophus had bet seventy-two dollars and fifty cents that Cupid would win; and Cupid had bet sixty-five dollars net that Cleophus would be returned victor. Only seven dollars and a half—the

difference between the principal placed with him by Cleophus, the amount bet, and the commission due—remained to be laid.

Downtown Cleophus swelled through the throng waiting to board the two special cars for Blue Lake Park and boasted of his own pugilistic prowess.

"Does you really think you is gwine lick Cupid Baldon, Cleophus?"

"Huh! Whippin' men like him ain't nothin' on'y mawnin' exercise fo' me, boy. I is thutty poun's heavier an' th'ee times stronger as him, an' when I an' he finishes up they ain't gwine be nothin' lef' of that Cupid 'ceptin' on'y one feather on his off wing. I is steered clear of trouble with him's long as I could, but when sweet cha'ity says I is got to fight I is gwine do it; an' Cupid Baldon is goin' to be the s'prisedes' an' sorries' man what is."

In due time the free boasting of Cleophus—who was seeking to hypnotize others into belief in his prowess, so they would bet on him and cover the money he had placed to be bet against himself—reached the ears of Cupid Baldon.

That perturbed coloured gentleman, almost as afraid of Cleophus' additional thirty pounds of brawn and muscle as he was of the scientific and hard-hitting Knockout Dixie, streaked down to the dingy den occupied by Boston Marble.

"Is you placed that sixty-five dollars of mine yet, Brother Marble?"

"Reckon so."

"How?"

"The bet jes' says you is gwine lose."

Cupid chuckled shamelessly: "Brother Marble, that is the safes' an' sures' bet what ever was laid. G'by!"

The picnic was in full swing when Boston Marble put in his appearance at Blue Lake Park. The centre of attraction was a baseball game, then swinging to an exciting finish. Cleophus spied his betting agent and cornered that wall-eyed gentleman.

"Did you bet my sevumty-five dollars, Brother Marble?"

"Uh-huh!"

"All of it?"

"All 'ceptin' two-fifty, which is my c'mission."

"Elegant!" enthused Cleophus. "That is 'bout the sures' bet what ever was."

"Reckon so," retorted Boston Marble, without a flicker of interest.

He even failed to add that he had weighed the matter carefully and had decided that the ability of a professional fighter to lose if he so willed it was worthy of implicit confidence; and that personally he had assumed the remaining seven-fifty of Cleophus' money. The picnic was a howling, delirious success. The noon hour was made historical by a surpassing barbecue. Reverend Plato Tubb circulated fussily through the crowd and talked frequently and passionately with the elated treasurer of the First African M. E. Church, who gave glowing reports of the everswelling receipts.

The atmosphere was surcharged with tense expectancy. The crowd had divided into two factions—one clustering about Cupid Baldon, the other round Cleophus White. Both warriors boasted tirelessly of the lethal qualities of their favourite blows. Would-be bettors shook their heads and refused to wager; they didn't quite understand how the money would be paid out when both fighters had been exterminated. The fight had long since assumed the aspect of a grudge battle, and the crowd—male and female—was on edge.

"Ain't nobody know how long this heah fight gwine las'," chuckled Dr. Brutus Herring; "but while it does they's gwine be steam a-plenty roun' that ring."

Wagers were conspicuous by their absence. The gambling gentry could not bet on Cleophus and dared not bet against him. Even Florian Slappey and Dr. Brutus Herring, loudest in praise of the homemade warrior, were too canny to back their confidence with cash.

As for Cleophus, he was frightened to a pale green. He tried to concentrate on the seventy-two dollars and fifty cents

reward that the fight should be short and painless. His spine turned to marrow and his heart to lead.

Cupid Baldon proved the better actor. He made considerable hay while the sun was shining. He rambled where the crowd was thickest, Maldonia on his arm, his stentorian voice rising above the din of hilarity. Inwardly he was excessively perturbed. He knew that, if whipped by so redoubtable a fighter as Knockout Dixie, he would be safely hidden behind a burglar-proof alibi; but the presence of the jelly-fish Cleophus in the lists complicated matters.

Being no fighter himself, he held the latent ability of Cleophus in abiding respect. He wasn't sure whether Cleophus' boastings camouflaged a strong or faint heart. If the former, he knew he was in for an unscientific and therefore doubly vicious trimming. If the latter, he realized there was much truth in the adage anent the cornered rat.

Cleophus was thirty pounds heavier; and thirty pounds on the executive end of a five-ounce boxing glove makes considerable difference.

Cupid intended to lose, but he was wary enough to lay his plans with meticulous care. He knew of Cleophus' threats and became sadly convinced that, however much Cleophus might expect to come out on the short end, he was determined to go down fighting. Mr. Baldon anticipated a very unpleasant few minutes. He knew just enough about the mitt game to stave off Cleophus' rushes for a round or two; so he planned to flop the minute Cleophus became unduly rough.

And by doing so he knew his prestige would be irretrievably lost. Defeated by Cleophus, the city would be decidedly too small for him. Therefore he planned to collect his defeat winnings from Boston Marble with the utmost dispatch and silently depart for another city—the more silently, the better. He was too wise in the ways of women to fancy for a split second that Maldonia would continue to lavish her affection upon him. He had even suspected for a considerable time that she was growing a wee bit tired of his eternal use of the

personal pronoun and was casting hungry glances at the now aloof Cleophus.

At three o'clock in the afternoon the crowd surged through the narrow gates of the grand stand. Eager hands had long since constructed a rude but serviceable twenty-foot ring just in front of the home plate. Chairs had been placed in opposite corners; and beside each were large battered buckets containing water, and several obviously secondhand towels. By three-thirty the crowd grew fidgety and commenced howling for action.

Bud Peaglar, proprietor of the justly famous Barbecue Lunch Room and Billiard Parlor, and by virtue of that eminence selected as third man in the ring, crawled under the ropes and silenced the crowd with a Delsartean gesture. He then announced sonorously the principals in the impending friendly boxing exhibition were at that moment preparing to enter the arena.

The raucous bellowings of the crowd were hushed. Only the womenfolks chattered. The masculine members of the gathering grinned gleefully at one another in anticipation of the gore that was destined to flow in the very immediate future. And in the front row on the grand stand, infinitely proud of the fact that all eyes were focussed upon her, was Maldonia Rouse, beloved of the two fighters.

For the first time in her young and sheltered life, Miss Maldonia Rouse was experiencing sheer unalloyed ecstasy. She sat in the full glare of the limelight, bedecked in her finest, and wearing her crown of laurel as modestly as a poet guest of the Ladies' Thursday Afternoon Literary Society.

An urchin in the bleachers turned loose a wild shrill yodel. The people on the grand stand craned their necks and then took it up. It became a roar that swept the field. Across the diamond, toward the ring, stalked the enormous figure of Cleophus White, enveloped in a heavy overcoat.

The home-grown warrior had never been quite so acutely miserable in the whole of his heretofore pacific existence.

He wriggled through the ropes and sank limply on the rickety chair provided by the pompous master of ceremonies. His face suggested that he had recently mistaken tabasco sauce for tomato ketchup and was trying to get away with it.

Pliny Driver, a doleful employé of the City Ice Company, followed Cleophus into the ring and stood mournfully gazing over the heads of the crowd, paying no heed whatever to his principal.

And then Cupid Baldon appeared; Appearing was about the best thing Cupid did, and this particular appearance did nothing to lessen the terror that was gripping Cleophus' vitals.

Cupid was a study in futurist art. His bathrobe made Joseph's coat look like a shy and shrinking violet. He was followed by a retinue of seven grinning, self-important negroes, each bearing aloft a bit of battle paraphernalia—a box of powdered resin, towels, sponge, a new bucket, a bottle of ammonia, smelling salts, tire tape. For a few brief moments Cupid relaxed to the full enjoyment of the adulation commonly accorded a champion in his home town.

He placed his left hand on the corner post and vaulted lightly over the ropes. The crowd yowled. Cupid grinned, bowed, waved to a few particular friends, and boldly threw a kiss to Maldonia, much to that damsel's delighted embarrassment. Then he turned and crossed to Cleophus, hand extended.

Cleophus, knowing nothing of prize-ring procedure, and fancying that this might be the commencement of hostilities, cowered and covered. Then he realized that Cupid merely meant to shake hands, and he extended a limp and fishy paw.

Four of Cupid's seconds collaborated in the selection of the two best gloves. Pliny sadly took the remaining pair. Five minutes later Bud Peaglar called the men to the centre of the ring, imparted verbose instructions and sent them to their corners.

Cleophus stood alone in his corner, staring with fascinated horror at Cupid's strictly professional antics. Larger than

his opponent by a score and a half of pounds, he felt like a mere pygmy before this mountain of confidence. And Cupid made the most of his flickering fading glory.

He ostentatiously rubbed his shoes in the powdered resin. Then he shadow-sparred for a few seconds—"Jes' to git these heah muscles limbered up a li'l' bit." After which he placed both gloves on the ropes and pushed and pulled valiantly to make sure that they were strong and springy. Finally he turned.

"Ise ready, Mistuh Referee."

Bud Peaglar nodded and turned to Cleophus.

"Is you ready, too, Brother White?"

Cleophus gulped. As well ask a condemned man, already strapped in the electric chair, whether he is prepared for the lethal current. In a hollow, sepulchral tone Cleophus delivered his pugilistic valedictory:

"I is."

The gong sounded. The two warriors—each of whom had bet upon himself to lose—dashed to the centre of the ring, paused abruptly and faced each other.

Cleophus, knees trembling visibly, jaw sagging weakly, stood with both muscular arms rigidly extended. He half closed his eyes, patiently awaiting the anæsthetic punch.

But Cupid Baldon had planned otherwise for Cleophus. He slouched into a pose made famous by one James J. Jeffries. His face grew deadly serious, arms travelling like twin pistons, feet tap-tapping like those of a dancing master.

His gloves described marvellous parabolas in the air. He swished and swerved and slipped about the petrified Cleophus, who stood motionless, staring in hypnotic horror, arms still rigidly extended.

Cupid intended to lose; but he realized that if he went down and out in the very first round he would stand but a slim chance of getting away from Blue Lake Park with a whole skin. So he planned to let the fight rock safely along through a couple of rounds, then to rush with simulated

savagery, landing soft taps upon the body of his opponent. After which he would take a quiet shove and go down for the count. Perhaps that would satisfy the fans.

As for the onlookers, they stood up on their seats and roared with delight at Cupid's display of pugilistic pyrotechnics. The gentlemen in the crowd howled for blood, a plea that added limpness to Cleophus' already watery spinal column.

After half a minute it became patent to Cupid that Cleophus had no intention whatever of hitting him. With that cheerful knowledge, the supposed professional fighter became emboldened. He danced gracefully in, reached out a glove, and implanted a light and tentative tap on Mr. Cleophus White's nasal organ.

Whereupon Mr. Cleophus White dropped limply to the floor of the ring!

More—after landing carefully in a reclining posture, he turned over on his back, stretched his arms wide, and rolled his eyes in token of unconditional surrender. The spectators roared profuse disapproval. The prostrate warrior did not move. Bud Peaglar, referee, leaned over the fallen man and counted:

"One—two—th'ee—fo'——"

Cupid Baldon paused. Things were happening too swiftly for his brain to cope adequately with them. He stared in horrified amazement at the body of his antagonist. Into his mind there leaped a picture of the diamond ring he had borrowed from Maldonia Rouse, converted into cash, and bet upon himself to lose. He joined the referee in pleading with Cleophus:

"Git up!" he howled. "Git up, nigger! I ain't on'y hit you easy."

"I—Ise 'licked!" returned Cleophus positively.

"——Five—six——" droned the referee inexorably.

Cupid's air castles were crumbling. He was about to win the fight when the last thing in the world he desired was

to be the victor. His whole worldly capital was bet the other way. And if Cleophus succeeded in being knocked out there would be nothing for Cupid to do but hit the cross-ties for parts entirely unknown—penniless and friendless.

"——Seven——"

Cupid acted. He leaned over Cleophus and slipped his gloves under the arms of the fallen man. He tugged, grunted, and tugged again. He lifted Cleophus to a sitting posture.

"Git up, Cleophus!" he wailed. "Git up—please!"

"——Eight——"

"Lemme 'lone!" snapped Cleophus peevishly. "Cain't you see I is knocked out?"

"You ain't knocked out. You cain't be! Git up heah!"

Cupid made one last frantic tug as the voice of Bud Peaglar intoned:

"——Nine!——"

Then his hands slipped and Mr. Cleophus White slid back happily to the floor, where he reclined in luxurious safety while the referee announced the fatal:

"——Ten—an' out!"

Somehow Cleophus White managed to get away from Blue Lake Park and to his room without being manhandled. Sitting on his bed he found the melancholy Boston Marble, who wordlessly extended to him one hundred and forty-five dollars. It was the first ray of sunshine to creep into Cleophus' foggy cosmos.

"You win 'cause'n you los'," drawled Boston, a bit ill over the fact that personally he had contributed a small portion of the fund he was handing over.

"Yeh—I won! But—but who was fool 'nough to bet I'd lick that they prize fighter?"

"Him." The ghost of a smile creased Boston's lips.

"Who?"

"Cupid Baldon."

"Huh! My Lowd! Brother Marble, is you sittin' they tellin' me Cupid Baldon was bettin' he was gwine lose?"

"Uh-huh! An' that's the money which you wins from him."

Cleophus passed a limp hand across a perspiring forehead.

"Where Cupid is at?"

"The las' time he was saw," answered Boston Marble, "he was hitchin' hisse'f onto a freight train which was headed no'th an' travelin' fast."

Investigation disclosed the truth of Boston's statement. Cupid had vanished with commendable thoroughness. The news spread rapidly. No one quite understood it, but all knew that something was radically wrong.

And gradually a smile usurped the gloom plastered all over Cleophus' face; and that night at eight o'clock he presented himself at the Rouse homestead.

He found a huddled, sobby Maldonia, who flung herself wildly into his arms, loudly protesting her love. And then, between ardent and audible kisses, she told him of her perfidy in the matter of his engagement ring and of defection of the unscrupulous Cupid Baldon; of his winning with her money and departing with all of it.

Cleophus had recently become adept in quick and decisive thought. Almost before she finished speaking he pressed into her not unwilling hands seven ten-dollar bills and one crisp new five.

"Buy yo'se'f a new 'gagement ring, honey!" he ordered proudly. She burst into a fresh paroxysm of sobbing.

"You is too good, Cleophus; you is onti'ly too good. Where you git all this heah money?"

"From offen Cupid Baldon!"

"Eh! How come that?"

Cleophus puffed.

"I is a terrible misundumstood man, da'lin'. Yestiddy I learned that Cupid was bettin' he was gwine lose the fight. An' somehow—nev' min' astin' me how, 'cause'n it's a dead

confumdential secret—I heard of him pawnin' my 'gagement ring to git that money he bet he was gwine lose. I made up my min' to beat him to it; so I went skallyhootin' to Boston Marble, which he was layin' his money with, an' bet my money 'gainst his money that I was gwine be the loser."

"Honey!"

"Yeh, Maldonia; tha's jes' prezac'ly what I done. An' tha's how come I to make a spectickle outen myse'f this afternoon, sweetness—jes' 'count'n I loves you so much. An' I is won back the money fo' the 'gagement ring. An' mebbe we c'n git ma'ied soon—huh?"

"Whenever you says the wo'd, Cleophus; jes' whenever you wan's." She snuggled close.

Ensued a few minutes of ardent silence. And finally he sighed deeply.

"They is on'y one thing I regrets, Maldonia."

"On'y one thing?"

"Jes' on'y one."

"Tha's which?"

"I is always gwine be sorry Cupid Baldon di'n't go bet on hisse'f to win; 'cause'n if he had I'd shuah knocked him into the middle of nex' summer. Hones', it was all I could do to keep from hurtin' that nigger bad when I had him at my mercy in that they ring!"

"Yeh," agreed Maldonia adoringly; "I could tell that from the way you fit."

"LITTLE GENTLEMAN" *

By Booth Tarkington

The midsummer sun was stinging hot outside the little barber-shop next to the corner drug store and Penrod, undergoing a toilette preliminary to his very slowly approaching twelfth birthday, was adhesive enough to retain upon his face much hair as it fell from the shears. There is a mystery here: the tonsorial processes are not unagreeable to manhood; in truth, they are soothing; but the hairs detached from a boy's head get into his eyes, his ears, his nose, his mouth, and down his neck, and he does everywhere itch excrutiatingly. Wherefore he blinks, winks, weeps, twitches, condenses his countenance, and squirms; and perchance the barber's scissors clip more than intended—belike an outlying flange of ear.

"Um—muh—*ow!*" said Penrod, this thing having happened.

"D' I touch y' up a little?" inquired the barber, smiling falsely.

"Ooh—*uh!*" The boy in the chair offered inarticulate protest, as the wound was rubbed with alum.

"*That* don't hurt!" said the barber. "You *will* get it, though, if you don't sit stiller," he continued, nipping in the bud any attempt on the part of his patient to think that he already had "it."

"Pfuff!" said Penrod, meaning no disrespect, but endeavouring to dislodge a temporary moustache from his lip.

* From *Penrod;* copyright, 1914, by Doubleday, Page & Company. Reprinted by permission of the author and the publishers.

"You ought to see how still that little Georgie Bassett sits," the barber went on, reprovingly. "I hear everybody says he's the best boy in town."

"Pfuff! *Phirr!*" There was a touch of intentional contempt in this.

"I haven't heard nobody around the neighbourhood makin' no such remarks," added the barber, "about nobody of the name of Penrod Schofield."

"Well," said Penrod, clearing his mouth after a struggle, "who wants 'em to? Ouch!"

"I hear they call Georgie Bassett the 'little gentleman,'" ventured the barber, provocatively, meeting with instant success.

"They better not call *me* that," returned Penrod truculently. "I'd like to hear anybody try. Just once, that's all! I bet they'd never try it ag——*Ouch!*"

"Why? What'd you do to 'em?"

"It's all right what I'd *do!* I bet they wouldn't want to call me that again long as they lived!"

"What'd you do if it was a little girl? You wouldn't hit her, would you?"

"Well, I'd—— Ouch!"

"You wouldn't hit a little girl, would you?" the barber persisted, gathering into his powerful fingers a mop of hair from the top of Penrod's head and pulling that suffering head into an unnatural position. "Doesn't the Bible say it ain't never right to hit the weak sex?"

"Ow! *Say,* look *out!*"

"So you'd go and punch a pore, weak, little girl, would you?" said the barber, reprovingly.

"Well, who said I'd hit her?" demanded the chivalrous Penrod. "I bet I'd *fix* her though, all right. She'd see!"

"You wouldn't call her names, would you?"

"No, I wouldn't! What hurt is it to call anybody names?"

"Is that *so!*" exclaimed the barber. "Then you was intending what I heard you hollering at Fisher's grocery de-

livery wagon driver fer a favour, the other day when I was goin' by your house, was you? I reckon I better tell him, because he says to me after*wards* if he ever lays eyes on you when you ain't in your own yard, he's goin' to do a whole lot o' things you ain't goin' to like! Yessir, that's what he says to *me!*"

"He better catch me first, I guess, before he talks so much."

"Well," resumed the barber, "that ain't sayin' what you'd do if a young lady ever walked up and called you a little gentleman. *I* want to hear what you'd do to her. I guess I know, though—come to think of it."

"What?" demanded Penrod.

"You'd sick that pore ole dog of yours on her cat, if she had one, I expect," guessed the barber derisively.

"No, I would not!"

"Well, what *would* you do?"

"I'd do enough. Don't worry about that!"

"Well, suppose it was a boy, then: what'd you do if a boy come up to you and says, 'Hello, little gentleman?' "

"He'd be lucky," said Penrod, with a sinister frown, "if he got home alive."

"Suppose it was a boy twice your size?"

"Just let him try," said Penrod ominously. "You just let him try. He'd never see daylight again; that's all!"

The barber dug ten active fingers into the helpless scalp before him and did his best to displace it, while the anguished Penrod, becoming instantly a seething crucible of emotion, misdirected his natural resentment into maddened brooding upon what he would do to a boy "twice his size" who should dare to call him "little gentleman." The barber shook him as his father had never shaken him; the barber buffeted him, rocked him frantically to and fro; the barber seemed to be trying to wring his neck; and Penrod saw himself in staggering zigzag pictures, destroying large screaming, fragmentary boys who had insulted him.

The torture stopped suddenly; and clenched, weeping eyes

began to see again, while the barber applied cooling lotions which made Penrod smell like a coloured housemaid's ideal.

"Now what," asked the barber, combing the reeking locks gently, "what would it make you so mad fer, to have somebody call you a little gentleman? It's a kind of compliment, as it were, you might say. What would you want to hit anybody fer *that* fer?"

To the mind of Penrod, this question was without meaning or reasonableness. It was within neither his power nor his desire to analyze the process by which the phrase had become offensive to him, and was now rapidly assuming the proportions of an outrage. He knew only that his gorge rose at the thought of it.

"You just let 'em try it!" he said threateningly, as he slid down from the chair. And as he went out of the door, after further conversation on the same subject he called back those warning words once more: "Just let 'em try it! Just once—that's all *I* ask 'em to. They'll find out what they *get!*"

The barber chuckled. Then a fly lit on the barber's nose and he slapped at it, and the slap missed the fly but did not miss the nose. The barber was irritated. At this moment his birdlike eye gleamed a gleam as it fell upon customers approaching: the prettiest little girl in the world, leading by the hand her baby brother, Mitchy-Mitch, coming to have Mitchy-Mitch's hair clipped, against the heat.

It was a hot day and idle, with little to feed the mind—and the barber was a mischievous man with an irritated nose. He did his worst.

Meanwhile, the brooding Penrod pursued his homeward way; no great distance, but long enough for several one-sided conflicts with malign insulters made of thin air. "You better *not* call me that!" he muttered. "You just try it, and you'll get what other people got when *they* tried it. You better not ack fresh with *me!* Oh, you *will,* will you?" He delivered a vicious kick full upon the shins of an iron fence-post,

which suffered little, though Penrod instantly regretted his indiscretion. "Oof!" he grunted, hopping; and went on after bestowing a look of awful hostility upon the fence-post. "I guess you'll know better next time," he said, in parting, to this antagonist. "You just let me catch you around here again and I'll——" His voice sank to inarticulate but ominous murmurings. He was in a dangerous mood.

Nearing home, however, his belligerent spirit was diverted to happier interests by the discovery that some workmen had left a caldron of tar in the cross-street, close by his father's stable. He tested it, but found it inedible. Also, as a substitute for professional chewing-gum it was unsatisfactory, being insufficiently boiled down and too thin, though of a pleasant, lukewarm temperature. But it had an excess of one quality—it was sticky. It was the stickiest tar Penrod had ever used for any purposes whatsoever, and nothing upon which he wiped his hands served to rid them of it; neither his polka-dotted shirt waist nor his knickerbockers; neither the fence, nor even Duke, who came unthinkingly wagging out to greet him, and retired wiser.

Nevertheless, tar is tar. Much can be done with it, no matter what its condition: so Penrod lingered by the caldron, though from a neighbouring yard could be heard the voices of comrades, including that of Sam Williams. On the ground about the caldron were scattered chips and sticks and bits of wood to the number of a great multitude. Penrod mixed quantities of this refuse into the tar, and interested himself in seeing how much of it he could keep moving in slow swirls upon the ebon surface.

Other surprises were arranged for the absent workmen. The caldron was almost full, and the surface of the tar near the rim. Penrod endeavoured to ascertain how many pebbles and brickbats, dropped in, would cause an overflow. Labouring heartily to this end, he had almost accomplished it, when he received the suggestion for an experiment on a much larger scale. Embedded at the corner of a grass-plot across the

street was a whitewashed stone, the size of a small watermelon and serving no purpose whatever save the questionable one of decoration. It was easily pried up with a stick; though getting it to the caldron tested the full strength of the ardent labourer. Instructed to perform such a task, he would have sincerely maintained its impossibility; but now, as it was unbidden, and promised rather destructive results, he set about it with unconquerable energy, feeling certain that he would be rewarded with a mighty splash. Perspiring, grunting vehemently, his back aching and all muscles strained, he progressed in short stages until the big stone lay at the base of the caldron. He rested a moment, panting, then lifted the stone, and was bending his shoulders for the heave that would lift it over the rim, when a sweet, taunting voice, close behind him, startled him cruelly.

"How do you do, *little gentleman!*"

Penrod squawked, dropped the stone, and shouted, "Shut up, you dern fool!" purely from instinct, even before his about-face made him aware who had so spitefully addressed him.

It was Marjorie Jones. Always dainty, and prettily dressed, she was in speckless and starchy white to-day, and a refreshing picture she made, with the new-shorn and powerfully scented Mitchy-Mitch clinging to her hand. They had stolen up behind the toiler, and now stood laughing together in sweet merriment. Since the passing of Penrod's Rupe Collins period he had experienced some severe qualms at the recollection of his last meeting with Marjorie and his Apache behaviour; in truth, his heart instantly became as wax at sight of her, and he would have offered her fair speech; but, alas! in Marjorie's wonderful eyes there shone a consciousness of new powers for his undoing, and she denied him opportunity.

"Oh, *oh!*" she cried, mocking his pained outcry. "What a way for a *little gentleman* to talk! Little gentlemen don't say wicked——"

"Marjorie!" Penrod, enraged and dismayed, felt himself stung beyond all endurance. Insult from her was bitterer to endure than from any other. "Don't you call me that again!"

"Why not, *little gentleman?*"

He stamped his foot. "You better stop!"

Marjorie sent into his furious face her lovely, spiteful laughter.

"Little gentleman, little gentleman, little gentleman!" she said deliberately. "How's the little gentleman, this afternoon? Hello, little gentleman!"

Penrod, quite beside himself, danced eccentrically. "Dry up!" he howled. "Dry up, dry up, dry up, dry *up!*"

Mitchy-Mitch shouted with delight and applied a finger to the side of the caldron—a finger immediately snatched away and wiped upon a handkerchief by his fastidious sister.

"'Ittle gellamun!" said Mitchy-Mitch.

"You better look out!" Penrod whirled upon this small offender with grim satisfaction. Here was at least something male that could without dishonour be held responsible. "You say that again, and I'll give you the worst——"

"You will *not!*" snapped Marjorie, instantly vitriolic. "He'll say just whatever he wants to, and he'll say it just as *much* as he wants to. Say it again, Mitchy-Mitch!"

"'Ittle gellamun!" said Mitchy-Mitch promptly.

"Ow-*yah!*" Penrod's tone-production was becoming affected by his mental condition. "You say that again, and I'll——"

"Go on, Mitchy-Mitch," cried Marjorie. "He can't do a thing. He don't *dare!* Say it some more, Mitchy-Mitch—say it a whole lot!"

Mitchy-Mitch, his small, fat face shining with confidence in his immunity, complied.

"'Ittle gellamun!" he squeaked malevolently. "'Ittle gellamun! 'Ittle gellamun! 'Ittle gellamun!"

The desperate Penrod bent over the whitewashed rock,

lifted it, and then—outdoing Porthos, John Ridd, and Ursus in one miraculous burst of strength—heaved it into the air.

Marjorie screamed.

But it was too late. The big stone descended into the precise midst of the caldron and Penrod got his mighty splash. It was far, far beyond his expectations.

Spontaneously there were grand and awful effects—volcanic spectacles of nightmare and eruption. A black sheet of eccentric shape rose out of the caldron and descended upon the three children, who had no time to evade it.

After it fell, Mitchy-Mitch, who stood nearest the caldron, was the thickest, though there was enough for all. Bre'r Rabbit would have fled from any of them.

When Marjorie and Mitchy-Mitch got their breath, they used it vocally; and seldom have more penetrating sounds issued from human throats. Coincidentally, Marjorie, quite baresark, laid hands upon the largest stick within reach and fell upon Penrod with blind fury. He had the presence of mind to flee, and they went round and round the caldron, while Mitchi-Mitch feebly endeavoured to follow—his appearance, in this pursuit, being pathetically like that of a bug fished out of an ink-well, alive but discouraged.

Attracted by the riot, Samuel Williams made his appearance, vaulting a fence, and was immediately followed by Maurice Levy and Georgie Bassett. They stared incredulously at the extraordinary spectacle before them.

"Little GEN-TIL-MUN!" shrieked Marjorie, with a wild stroke that landed full upon Penrod's tarry cap.

"Oooch!" bleated Penrod.

"It's Penrod!" shouted Sam Williams, recognizing him by the voice. For an instant he had been in some doubt.

"Penrod Schofield!" exclaimed Georgie Bassett. *"What* does this mean?" That was Georgie's style, and had helped to win him his title.

Marjorie leaned, panting, upon her stick. "I cu-called—uh—him—oh!" she sobbed—"I called him a lul-little—oh—gentleman! And oh—lul-look!—oh! lul-look at my du-dress! Lul-look at Mumitchy—oh—Mitch—oh!"

Unexpectedly, she smote again—with results—and then, seizing the indistinguishable hand of Mitchy-Mitch, she ran wailing homeward down the street.

"'Little gentleman?'" said Georgie Bassett, with some evidences of disturbed complacency. "Why, that's what they call *me!*"

"Yes, and you *are* one, too!" shouted the maddened Penrod. "But you better not let anybody call *me* that! I've stood enough around here for one day, and you can't run over *me,* Georgie Bassett. Just you put that in your gizzard and smoke it!"

"Anybody has a perfect right," said Georgie, with dignity, "to call a person a little gentleman. There's lots of names nobody ought to call, but this one's a *nice*——"

"You better look out!"

Unavenged bruises were distributed all over Penrod, both upon his body and upon his spirit. Driven by subtle forces, he had dipped his hands in catastrophe and disaster: it was not for a Georgie Bassett to beard him. Penrod was about to run amuck.

"I haven't called you a little gentleman, yet," said Georgie. "I only said it. Anybody's got a right to *say* it."

"Not around *me!* You just try it again and——"

"I shall say it," returned Georgie, "all I please. Anybody in this town has a right to *say* 'little gentleman'——"

Bellowing insanely, Penrod plunged his right hand into the caldron, rushed upon Georgie and made awful work of his hair and features.

Alas, it was but the beginning! Sam Williams and Maurice Levy screamed with delight, and, simultaneously infected, danced about the struggling pair, shouting frantically:

"Little gentleman! Little gentleman! Sick him, Georgie! Sick him, little gentleman! Little gentleman! Little gentleman!"

The infuriated outlaw turned upon them with blows and more tar, which gave Georgie Bassett his opportunity and later seriously impaired the purity of his fame. Feeling himself hopelessly tarred, he dipped both hands repeatedly into the caldron and applied his gatherings to Penrod. It was bringing coals to Newcastle, but it helped to assuage the just wrath of Georgie.

The four boys gave a fine imitation of the Laocoön group complicated by an extra figure—frantic splutterings and chokings, strange cries and stranger words issued from this tangle; hands dipped lavishly into the inexhaustible reservoir of tar, with more and more picturesque results. The caldron had been elevated upon bricks and was not perfectly balanced; and under a heavy impact of the struggling group it lurched and went partly over, pouring forth a Stygian tide which formed a deep pool in the gutter.

It was the fate of Master Roderick Bitts, that exclusive and immaculate person, to make his appearance upon the chaotic scene at this juncture. All in the cool of a white "sailor suit," he turned aside from the path of duty—which led straight to the house of a maiden aunt—and paused to hop with joy upon the sidewalk. A repeated epithet continuously half panted, half squawked, somewhere in the nest of gladiators, caught his ear, and he took it up excitedly, not knowing why.

"Little gentleman!" shouted Roderick, jumping up and down in childish glee. "Little gentleman! Little gentleman! Lit——"

A frightful figure tore itself free from the group, encircled this innocent bystander with a black arm, and hurled him headlong. Full length and flat on his face went Roderick into the Stygian pool. The frightful figure was Penrod. Instantly, the pack flung themselves upon him again, and, car-

rying them with him, he went over upon Roderick, who from that instant was as active a belligerent as any there.

Thus began the Great Tar Fight, the origin of which proved, afterward, so difficult for parents to trace, owing to the opposing accounts of the combatants. Marjorie said Penrod began it; Penrod said Mitchy-Mitch began it; Sam Williams said Georgie Bassett began it; Georgie and Maurice Levy said Penrod began it; Roderick Bitts, who had not recognized his first assailant, said Sam Williams began it.

Nobody thought of accusing the barber. But the barber did not begin it; it was the fly on the barber's nose that began it—though, of course, something else began the fly. Somehow, we never manage to hang the real offender.

The end came only with the arrival of Penrod's mother, who had been having a painful conversation by telephone with Mrs. Jones, the mother of Marjorie, and came forth to seek an errant son. It is a mystery how she was able to pick out her own, for by the time she got there his voice was too hoarse to be recognizable.

Mr. Schofield's version of things was that Penrod was insane. "He's a stark, raving lunatic!" declared the father, descending to the library from a before-dinner interview with the outlaw, that evening. "I'd send him to military school, but I don't believe they'd take him. Do you know *why* he says all that awfulness happened?"

"When Margaret and I were trying to scrub him," responded Mrs. Schofield wearily, "he said 'everybody' had been calling him names."

"'Names!'" snorted her husband. "'Little gentleman!' *That's* the vile epithet they called him! And because of it he wrecks the peace of six homes!"

"*Sh!* Yes; he told us about it," said Mrs. Schofield, moaning. "He told us several hundred times, I should guess, though I didn't count. He's got it fixed in his head, and we couldn't get it out. All we could do was to put him in the

closet. He'd have gone out again after those boys if we hadn't. I don't know *what* to make of him!"

"He's a mystery to *me!*" said her husband. "And he refuses to explain why he objects to being called 'little gentleman.' Says he'd do the same thing—and worse—if anybody dared to call him that again. He said if the President of the United States called him that he'd try to whip him. How long did you have him locked up in the closet?"

"*Sh!*" said Mrs. Schofield warningly. "About two hours; but I don't think it softened his spirit at all, because when I took him to the barber's to get his hair clipped again, on account of the tar in it, Sammy Williams and Maurice Levy were there for the same reason, and they just *whispered* 'little gentleman,' so low you could hardly hear them—and Penrod began fighting with them right before me, and it was really all the barber and I could do to drag him away from them. The barber was very kind about it, but Penrod——"

"I tell you he's a lunatic!" Mr. Schofield would have said the same thing of a Frenchman infuriated by the epithet "camel." The philosophy of insult needs expounding.

"*Sh!*" said Mrs. Schofield. "It does seem a kind of frenzy."

"Why on earth should any sane person mind being called——"

"*Sh!*" said Mrs. Schofield. "It's beyond *me!*"

"What are you *sh*-ing me for?" demanded Mr. Schofield explosively.

"*Sh!*" said Mrs. Schofield. "It's Mr. Kinosling, the new rector of Saint Joseph's."

"Where?"

"*Sh!*" On the front porch with Margaret; he's going to stay for dinner. I do hope——"

"Bachelor, isn't he?"

"Yes."

"*Our* old minister was speaking of him the other day," said Mr. Schofield, "and he didn't seem so terribly impressed."

"*Sh!* Yes; about thirty, and of course *so* superior to most

of Margaret's friends—boys home from college. She thinks she likes young Robert Williams, I know—but he laughs so much! Of course there isn't any comparison. Mr. Kinosling talks so intellectually; it's a good thing for Margaret to hear that kind of thing, for a change—and, of course, he's very spiritual. He seems very much interested in her." She paused to muse. "I think Margaret likes him; he's so different, too. It's the third time he's dropped in this week, and I——"

"Well," said Mr. Schofield grimly, "if you and Margaret want him to come again, you'd better not let him see Penrod."

"But he's asked to see him; he seems interested in meeting all the family. And Penrod nearly always behaves fairly well at table." She paused, and then put to her husband a question referring to his interview with Penrod upstairs. "Did you—did you—do it?"

"No," he answered gloomily. "No, I didn't, but——" He was interrupted by a violent crash of china and metal in the kitchen, a shriek from Della, and the outrageous voice of Penrod. The well-informed Della, ill-inspired to set up for a wit, had ventured to address the scion of the house roguishly as 'little gentleman,' and Penrod, by means of the rapid elevation of his right foot, had removed from her supporting hands a laden tray. Both parents started for the kitchen, Mr. Schofield completing his interrupted sentence on the way.

"But I will, now!"

The rite thus promised was hastily but accurately performed in that apartment most distant from the front porch; and, twenty minutes later, Penrod descended to dinner. The Rev. Mr. Kinosling had asked for the pleasure of meeting him, and it had been decided that the only course possible was to cover up the scandal for the present, and to offer an undisturbed and smiling family surface to the gaze of the visitor.

Scorched but not bowed, the smouldering Penrod was led

forward for the social formulæ simultaneously with the somewhat bleak departure of Robert Williams, who took his guitar with him, this time, and went in forlorn unconsciousness of the powerful forces already set in secret motion to be his allies.

The punishment just undergone had but made the haughty and unyielding soul of Penrod more stalwart in revolt; he was unconquered. Every time the one intolerable insult had been offered him, his resentment had become the hotter, his vengeance the more instant and furious. And, still burning with outrage, but upheld by the conviction of right, he was determined to continue to the last drop of his blood the defense of his honour, whenever it should be assailed, no matter how mighty or august the powers that attacked it. In all ways, he was a very sore boy.

During the brief ceremony of presentation, his usually inscrutable countenance wore an expression interpreted by his father as one of insane obstinacy, while Mrs. Schofield found it an incentive to inward prayer. The fine graciousness of Mr. Kinosling, however, was unimpaired by the glare of virulent suspicion given him by this little brother: Mr. Kinosling mistook it for a natural curiosity concerning one who might possibly become, in time, a member of the family. He patted Penrod upon the head, which was, for many reasons, in no condition to be patted with any pleasure to the pattee. Penrod felt himself in the presence of a new enemy.

"How do you do, my little lad," said Mr. Kinosling. "I trust we shall become fast friends."

To the ear of his little lad, it seemed he said, "A trost we shall bick-home fawst frainds." Mr. Kinosling's pronunciation was, in fact, slightly precious; and the little lad, simply mistaking it for some cryptic form of mockery of himself, assumed a manner and expression which argued so ill for the proposed friendship that Mrs. Schofield hastily interposed the suggestion of dinner, and the small procession went into the dining-room.

"It has been a delicious day," said Mr. Kinosling, presently;

"warm but balmy." With a benevolent smile he addressed Penrod, who sat opposite him. "I suppose, little gentleman, you have been indulging in the usual outdoor sports of vacation?"

Penrod laid down his fork and glared, open-mouthed at Mr. Kinosling.

"You'll have another slice of breast of the chicken?" Mr. Schofield inquired, loudly and quickly.

"A lovely day!" exclaimed Margaret, with equal promptitude and emphasis. "Lovely, oh, lovely! Lovely!"

"Beautiful, beautiful, beautiful!" said Mrs. Schofield, and after a glance at Penrod which confirmed her impression that he intended to say something, she continued, "Yes, beautiful, beautiful, beautiful, beautiful, beautiful, beautiful!"

Penrod closed his mouth and sank back in his chair—and his relatives took breath.

Mr. Kinosling looked pleased. This responsive family, with its ready enthusiasm, made the kind of audience he liked. He passed a delicate white hand gracefully over his tall, pale forehead, and smiled indulgently.

"Youth relaxes in summer," he said. "Boyhood is the age of relaxation; one is playful, light, free, unfettered. One runs and leaps and enjoys one's self with one's companions. It is good for the little lads to play with their friends; they jostle, push, and wrestle, and simulate little, happy struggles with one another in harmless conflict. The young muscles are toughening. It is good. Boyish chivalry develops, enlarges, expands. The young learn quickly, intuitively, spontaneously. They perceive the obligations of *noblesse oblige*. They begin to comprehend the necessity of caste and its requirements. They learn what birth means—ah,—that is, they learn what it means to be well born. They learn courtesy in their games; they learn politeness, consideration for one another in their pastimes, amusements, lighter occupations. I make it my pleasure to join them often, for I sympathize with them in all their wholesome joys as well as in their little

bothers and perplexities. I understand them, you see; and let me tell you it is no easy matter to understand the little lads and lassies." He sent to each listener his beaming glance, and, permitting it to come to rest upon Penrod, inquired:

"And what do you say to that, little gentleman?"

Mr. Schofield uttered a stentorian cough. "More? You'd better have some more chicken! More! Do!"

"More chicken!" urged Margaret simultaneously. "Do please! Please! More! Do! More!"

"Beautiful, beautiful," began Mrs. Schofield. "Beautiful, beautiful, beautiful, beautiful——"

It is not known in what light Mr. Kinosling viewed the expression of Penrod's face. Perhaps he mistook it for awe; perhaps he received no impression at all of its extraordinary quality. He was a rather self-engrossed young man, just then engaged in a double occupation, for he not only talked, but supplied from his own consciousness a critical though favourable auditor as well, which of course kept him quite busy. Besides, it is oftener than is suspected the case that extremely peculiar expressions upon the countenances of boys are entirely overlooked, and suggest nothing to the minds of people staring straight at them. Certainly Penrod's expression—which, to the perception of his family, was perfectly horrible—caused not the faintest perturbation in the breast of Mr. Kinosling.

Mr. Kinosling waived the chicken, and continued to talk. "Yes, I think I may claim to understand boys," he said, smiling thoughtfully. "One has been a boy one's self. Ah, it is not all playtime! I hope our young scholar here does not overwork himself at his Latin, at his classes, as I did, so that at the age of eight years I was compelled to wear glasses. He must be careful not to strain the little eyes at his scholar's tasks, not to let the little shoulders grow round over his scholar's desk. Youth is golden; we should keep it golden, bright, glistening. Youth should frolic, should be sprightly; it should play its cricket, its tennis, its hand-ball. It should

run and leap; it should laugh, should sing madrigals and glees, carol with the lark, ring out in chanties, folk-songs, ballads, roundelays——"

He talked on. At any instant Mr. Schofield held himself ready to cough vehemently and shout, "More chicken," to drown out Penrod in case the fatal words again fell from those eloquent lips; and Mrs. Schofield and Margaret kept themselves prepared at all times to assist him. So passed a threatening meal, which Mrs. Schofield hurried, by every means within decency, to its conclusion. She felt that somehow they would all be safer out in the dark of the front porch, and led the way thither as soon as possible.

"No cigar, I thank you." Mr. Kinosling, establishing himself in a wicker chair beside Margaret, waved away her father's proffer. "I do not smoke. I have never tasted tobacco in any form." Mrs. Schofield was confirmed in her opinion that this would be an ideal son-in-law. Mr. Schofield was not so sure.

"No," said Mr. Kinosling. "No tobacco for me. No cigar, no pipe, no cigarette, no cheroot. For me, a book—a volume of poems, perhaps. Verses, rhymes, lines metrical and cadenced—those are my dissipation. Tennyson by preference: 'Maud,' or 'Idylls of the King'—poetry of the sound Victorian days; there is none later. Or Longfellow will rest me in a tired hour. Yes; for me, a book, a volume in the hand, held lightly between the fingers."

Mr. Kinosling looked pleasantly at his fingers as he spoke, waving his hand in a curving gesture which brought it into the light of a window faintly illumined from the interior of the house. Then he passed those graceful fingers over his hair, and turned toward Penrod, who was perched upon the railing in a dark corner.

"The evening is touched with a slight coolness," said Mr. Kinosling. "Perhaps I may request the little gentleman——"

"B'gr-r-*ruff!*" coughed Mr. Schofield. "You'd better change your mind about a cigar."

"No, I thank you. I was about to request the lit——"

"*Do* try one," Margaret urged. "I'm sure papa's are nice ones. Do try——"

"No, I thank you. I remarked a slight coolness in the air, and my hat is in the hallway. I was about to request——"

"I'll get it for you," said Penrod suddenly.

"If you will be so good," said Mr. Kinosling. "It is a black bowler hat, little gentleman, and placed upon a table in the hall."

"I know where it is." Penrod entered the door, and a feeling of relief, mutually experienced, carried from one to another of his three relatives their interchanged congratulations that he had recovered his sanity.

"'The day is done, and the darkness,'" began Mr. Kinosling—and recited that poem entire. He followed it with "The Children's Hour," and after a pause at the close, to allow his listeners time for a little reflection upon his rendition, he passed his hand again over his head, and called, in the direction of the doorway:

"I believe I will take my hat now, little gentleman."

"Here it is," said Penrod, unexpectedly climbing over the porch railing, in the other direction. His mother and father and Margaret had supposed him to be standing in the hallway out of deference, and because he thought it tactful not to interrupt the recitations. All of them remembered, later, that this supposed thoughtfulness on his part struck them as unnatural.

"Very good, little gentleman!" said Mr. Kinosling, and being somewhat chilled, placed the hat firmly upon his head, pulling it down as far as it would go. It had a pleasant warmth, which he noticed at once. The next instant, he noticed something else, a pecliar sensation of the scalp—a sensation which he was quite unable to define. He lifted his hand to take the hat off, and entered upon a strange experience: his hat seemed to have decided to remain where it was.

"Do you like Tennyson as much as Longfellow, Mr. Kinosling?" inquired Margaret.

"I—ah—I cannot say," he returned absently. "I—ah—each has his own—ugh! flavour and savour, each his—ah—ah ——"

Struck by a strangeness in his tone, she peered at him curiously through the dusk. His outlines were indistinct, but she made out that his arms were uplifted in a singular gesture. He seemed to be wrenching at his head.

"Is—is anything the matter?" she asked anxiously. "Mr. Kinosling, are you ill?"

"Not at—ugh!—all," he replied, in the same odd tone. "I—ah—I believe—*ugh!*"

He dropped his hands from his hat, and rose. His manner was slightly agitated. "I fear I may have taken a trifling—ah—cold. I should—ah—perhaps be—ah—better at home. I will—ah—say good-night."

At the steps, he instinctively lifted his hand to remove his hat, but did not do so, and, saying "Good-night," again in a frigid voice, departed with visible stiffness from that house, to return no more.

"Well, of all——!" cried Mrs. Schofield, astounded. "What was the matter? He just went—like that!" She made a flurried gesture. "In heaven's name, Margaret, what *did* you say to him?"

"I!" exclaimed Margaret indignantly. "Nothing! He just *went!"*

"Why, he didn't even take off his hat when he said good-night!" said Mrs. Schofield.

Margaret, who had crossed to the doorway, caught the ghost of a whisper behind her, where stood Penrod.

"You bet he didn't!"

He knew not that he was overheard.

A frightful suspicion flashed through Margaret's mind—a suspicion that Mr. Kinosling's hat would have to be either

boiled off or shaved off. With growing horror she recalled Penrod's long absence when he went to bring the hat.

"Penrod," she cried, "let me see your hands!"

She had toiled at those hands herself late that afternoon, nearly scalding her own, but at last achieving a lily purity.

"Let me see your hands!"

She seized them.

Again they were tarred!

Reading List

Stories of Mood: Humor

Andrews, Mary S. "The Eternal Feminine."

Bacon, Josephine Daskam. "The Madness of Philip."

Butler, Ellis Parker. "Pigs Is Pigs."

Chekhov, Anton. "The Scandal Monger."

Cobb, Irvin. "The Bull Called Emily," "The Life of the Party."

Cohen, Octavus Roy. "Tempus Fugits," "Not Wisely but too Well."

Glass, Montague. "Object: Matrimony."

Henry, O. "The Handbook of Hymen," "Pimienta Pancakes," "The Lonesome Road," "Let Me Feel Your Pulse," "A Harlem Tragedy," "The Ransom of Red Chief," "Jeff Peters as a Personal Magnet."

Jacobs, W. W. "The Third String," "Blundell's Improvement," "The Money-Box," "His Other Self," "The Weaker Vessel," "A Black Affair," "The Lady of the Barge," "The Boatswain's Mate."

Lefèvre, Edwin. "A Woman and Her Bonds."

London, Jack. "When Alice Told Her Soul."

Merrick, Leonard. "The Tragedy of a Comic Song."

Pain, Barry. "Sparkling Burgundy."

Peple, Edward. "A Night Out."

Rinehart, Mary R. "Twenty-Three and a Half Hours' Leave."

Robbins, L. H. "Professor Todd's Used Car" (*Prize Stories of 1920*).

Shore, Viola Brothers. "We Can't Afford It," "Matzoths Cast Upon the Waters," "O Tempora! O Mawruss!"

Stockton, Frank. "The Transferred Ghost."

Stuart, Ruth. "The Second Wooing of Salina Sue."

Tarkington, Booth. *Penrod; Seventeen.*

TWAIN, MARK. "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County," "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg."

VAN LOAN, CHARLES. "Excess Baggage," "Nine Assists and Two Errors."

WHITE, WILLIAM ALLEN. 'While the Evil Days Come Not,' "The King of Boyville."

WIGGIN, KATE DOUGLAS. "The Green Isle."

WISTER, OWEN. "Happy Teeth," "Philosophy Four."

WODEHOUSE, P. G. "A Letter from Father" and "Doing Father a Bit of Good"; "The Sad Case of Looney Biddle" and "Summer Storms"; "The Growing Boy" and "Washy Steps into the Hall of Fame"; "The Wigmore Venus" and "The Tale of a Grandfather."

THE NIGHT CALL *

By Henry van Dyke

I

The first caprice of November snow had sketched the world in white for an hour in the morning. After mid-day, the sun came out, the wind turned warm, and the whiteness vanished from the landscape. By evening, the low ridges and the long plain of New Jersey were rich and sad again, in russet and dull crimson and old gold; for the foliage still clung to the oaks and elms and birches, and the dying monarchy of autumn retreated slowly before winter's cold republic.

In the old town of Calvinton, stretched along the highroad, the lamps were lit early as the saffron sunest faded into humid night. A mist rose from the long, wet street and the sodden lawns, muffling the houses and the trees and the college towers with a double veil, under which a pallid aureole encircled every light, while the moon above, languid and tearful, waded slowly through the mounting fog. It was a night of delay and expectation, a night of remembrance and mystery, lonely and dim and full of strange, dull sounds.

In one of the smaller houses on the main street the light in the window burned late. Leroy Carmichael was alone in his office reading Balzac's story of "The Country Doctor." He was not a gloomy or despondent person, but the spirit of the night had entered into him. He had yielded himself, as young

* From *The Unknown Quantity;* copyright, 1912, by Charles Scribner's Sons. Reprinted by permission of the author and the publisher.

men of ardent temperament often do, to the subduing magic of the fall. In his mind, as in the air, there was a soft, clinging mist, and blurred lights of thought, and a still foreboding of change. A sense of the vast tranquil movement of Nature, of her sympathy and of her indifference, sank deeply into his heart. For a time he realised that all things, and he, too, some day, must grow old; and he felt the universal pathos of it more sensitively, perhaps, than he would ever feel it again.

If you had told Carmichael that this was what he was thinking about as he sat in his bachelor quarters on that November night, he would have stared at you and then laughed.

"Nonsense," he would have answered, cheerfully. "I'm no sentimentalist: only a bit tired by a hard afternoon's work and a rough ride home. Then, Balzac always depresses me a little. The next time I'll take some quinine and Dumas: he is a tonic."

But, in fact, no one came in to interrupt his musings and rouse him to that air of cheerfulness with which he always faced the world, and to which, indeed (though he did not know it), he owed some measure of his delay in winning the confidence of Calvinton.

He had come there some five years ago with a particularly good outfit to practice medicine in that quaint and alluring old burgh, full of antique hand-made furniture and traditions. He had not only been well trained for his profession in the best medical school and hospital of New York, but he was also a graduate of Calvinton College (in which his father had been a professor for a time), and his granduncle was a Grubb, a name high in the Golden Book of Calvintonian aristocracy and inscribed upon tombstones in every village within a radius of fifteen miles. Consequently the young doctor arrived well accredited, and was received in his first year with many tokens of hospitality in the shape of tea-parties and suppers.

But the final and esoteric approval of Calvinton was a

thing apart from these mere fashionable courtesies and worldly amenities—a thing not to be bestowed without due consideration and satisfactory reasons. Leroy Carmichael failed, somehow or other, to come up to the requirements for a leading physician in such a conservative community. In the judgment of Calvinton he was a clever young man; but he lacked poise and gravity. He walked too lightly along the streets, swinging his stick, and greeting his acquaintances blithely, as if he were rather glad to be alive. Now this is a sentiment, if you analyse it, near akin to vanity, and, therefore, to be discountenanced in your neighbour and concealed in yourself. How can a man be glad that he is alive, and frankly show it, without a touch of conceit and a reprehensible forgetfulness of the presence of original sin even in the best families? The manners of a professional man, above all, should at once express and impose humility.

Young Dr. Carmichael, Calvinton said, had been spoiled by his life in New York. It had made him too gay, light-hearted, almost frivolous. It was possible that he might know a good deal about medicine, though doubtless that had been exaggerated; but it was certain that his temperament needed chastening before he could win the kind of confidence that Calvinton had given to the venerable Dr. Coffin, whose face was like a monument, and whose practice rested upon the two pillars of podophyllin and predestination.

So Carmichael still felt, after his five years' work, that he was an outsider; felt it rather more indeed than when he had first come. He had enough practice to keep him in good health and spirits. But his patients were along the side streets and in the smaller houses and out in the country. He was not called, except in a chance emergency, to the big houses with the white pillars. The inner circle had not yet taken him in.

He wondered how long he would have to work and wait for that. He knew that things in Calvinton moved slowly;

but he knew also that its silent and subconscious judgments sometimes crystallised with incredible rapidity and hardness. Was it possible that he was already classified in the group that came near but did not enter, an inhabitant but not a real burgher, a half-way citizen and a lifelong newcomer? That would be rough; he would not like growing old in that way.

But perhaps there was no such invisible barrier hemming in his path. Perhaps it was only the naturally slow movement of things that hindered him. Some day the gate would open. He would be called in behind those white pillars into the world of which his father had often told him stories and traditions. There he would prove his skill and his worth. He would make himself useful and trusted by his work. Then he could marry the girl he loved, and win a firm place and a real home in the old town whose strange charm held him so strongly even in the vague sadness of this autumnal night.

He turned again from these musings to his Balzac, and read the wonderful pages in which Benassis tells the story of his consecration to his profession and Captain Genestas confides the little Adrien to his care, and then the beautiful letter in which the boy describes the country doctor's death and burial. The simple pathos of it went home to Carmichael's heart.

"It is a fine life, after all," said he to himself, as he shut the book at midnight and laid down his pipe. "No man has a better chance than a doctor to come close to the real thing. Human nature is his patient, and each case is a symptom. It's worth while to work for the sake of getting nearer to the reality and doing some definite good by the way. I'm glad that this isn't one of those mystical towns where Christian Science and Buddhism and all sorts of vagaries flourish. Calvinton may be difficult, but it's not obscure. And some day I'll feel its pulse and get at the heart of it."

The silence of the little office was snapped by the nervous clamour of the electric bell, shrilling with a night call.

II

Dr. Carmichael turned on the light in the hall, and opened the front door. A tall, dark man of military aspect loomed out of the mist, and, behind him, at the curbstone, the outline of a big motorcar was dimly visible. He held out a visiting-card inscribed "Baron de Mortemer," and spoke slowly and courteously, but with a strong nasal accent and a tone of insistent domination.

"You are the Dr. Carmichael, yes? You speak French—no? It is a pity. There is need of you at once—a patient—it is very pressing. You will come with me, yes?"

"But I do not know you, sir," said the doctor; "you are——"

"The Baron de Mortemer," broke in the stranger, pointing to the card as if it answered all questions. "It is the Baroness who is very suffering—I pray you to come without delay."

"But what is it?" asked the doctor. "What shall I bring with me? My instrument-case?"

The Baron smiled with his lips and frowned with his eyes. "Not at all," he said, "Madame expects not an arrival—it is not so bad as that—but she has had a sudden access of anguish—she has demanded you. I pray you to come at the instant. Bring what pleases you, what you think best, but come!"

The man's manner was not agitated, but it was strangely urgent, overpowering, constraining; his voice was like a pushing hand. Carmichael threw on his coat and hat, hastily picked up his medicine-satchel and a portable electric battery, and followed the Baron to the motor.

The great car started easily and rolled softly purring down the deserted street. The houses were all asleep, and the college buildings dark as empty fortresses. The moon-threaded mist clung closely to the town like a shroud of gauze, not concealing the form beneath, but making its im-

mobility more mysterious. The trees drooped and dripped with moisture, and the leaves seemed ready, almost longing. to fall at a touch. It was one of those nights when the solid things of the world, the houses and the hills and the woods and the very earth itself, grow unreal to the point of vanishing; while the impalpable things, the presences of life and death which travel on the unseen air, the influences of the far-off starry lights, the silent messages and presentiments of darkness, the ebb and flow of vast currents of secret existence all around us, seem so close and vivid that they absorb and overwhelm us with their intense reality.

Through this realm of indistinguishable verity and illusion, strangely imposed upon the familiar, homely street of Calvinton, the machine ran smoothly, faintly humming, as the Frenchman drove it with master-skill—itself a dread of embodied power and speed. Gliding by the last cottages of Town's End where the street became the highroad, the car ran swiftly through the open country for a mile until it came to a broad entrance. The gate was broken from the leaning posts and thrown to one side. Here the machine turned in and laboured up a rough, grass-grown carriage-drive.

Carmichael knew that they were at Castle Gordon, one of the "old places" of Calvinton, which he often passed on his country drives. The house stood well back from the road, on a slight elevation, looking down over the oval field that was once a lawn, and the scattered elms and pines and Norway firs that did their best to preserve the memory of a noble plantation. The building was colonial; heavy stone walls covered with yellow stucco; tall white wooden pillars ranged along a narrow portico; a style which seemed to assert that a Greek temple was good enough for the residence of an American gentleman. But the clean buff and white of the house had long since faded. The stucco had cracked, and, here and there, had fallen from the stones. The paint on the pillars was dingy, peeling in round blisters and narrow strips from the grey wood underneath. The trees were

ragged and untended, the grass uncut, the driveway overgrown with weeds and gullied by rains—the whole place looked forsaken. Carmichael had always supposed that it was vacant. But he had not passed that way for nearly a month, and, meantime, it might have been reopened and tenanted.

The Baron drove the car around to the back of the house and stopped there.

"Pardon," said he, "that I bring you not to the door of entrance; but this is the more convenient."

He knocked hurriedly and spoke a few words in French. The key grated in the lock and the door creaked open. A withered, wiry little man, dressed in dark grey, stood holding a lighted candle, which flickered in the draught. His head was nearly bald; his sallow, hairless face might have been of any age from twenty to a hundred years; his eyes between their narrow red lids were glittering and inscrutable as those of a snake. As he bowed and grinned, showing his yellow. broken teeth, Carmichael thought that he had never seen a more evil face or one more clearly marked with the sign of the drug-fiend.

"My chauffeur, Gaspard," said the Baron, "also my valet, my cook, my chambermaid, my man to do all, what you call factotum, is it not? But he speaks not English, so pardon me once more."

He spoke a few words to the man, who shrugged his shoulders and smiled with the same deferential grimace while his unchanging eyes gleamed through their slits. Carmichael caught only the word "Madame" while he was slipping off his overcoat, and understood that they were talking of his patient.

"Come," said the Baron, "he says that it goes better, at least not worse—that is always something. Let us mount at the instant."

The hall was bare, except for a table on which a kitchen lamp was burning, and two chairs with heavy automobile coats and rugs and veils thrown upon them. The stairway

was uncarpeted, and the dust lay thick under the banisters. At the door of the back room on the second floor the Baron paused and knocked softly. A low voice answered, and he went in, beckoning the doctor to follow.

III

If Carmichael lived to be a hundred he could never forget that first impression. The room was but partly furnished, yet it gave at once the idea that it was inhabited; it was even, in some strange way, rich and splendid. Candles on the mantelpiece and a silver travelling-lamp on the dressing-table threw a soft light on little articles of luxury, and photographs in jewelled frames, and a couple of well-bound books, and a gilt clock marking the half-hour after midnight. A wood fire burned in the wide chimney-place, and before it a rug was spread. At one side there was a huge mahogany four-post bedstead, and there, propped up by the pillows, lay the noblest-looking woman that Carmichael had ever seen.

She was dressed in some clinging stuff of soft black, with a diamond at her breast, and a deep-red cloak thrown over her feet. She must have been past middle age, for her thick, brown hair was already touched with silver, and one lock of snow-white lay above her forehead. But her face was one of those which time enriches; fearless and tender and high-spirited, a speaking face in which the dark-lashed grey eyes were like words of wonder and the sensitive mouth like a clear song. She looked at the young doctor and held out her hand to him.

"I am glad to see you," she said, in her low, pure voice, "very glad! You are Roger Carmichael's son. Oh, I am glad to see you indeed."

"You are very kind," he answered, "and I am glad also to be of any service to you, though I do not yet know who you are."

The Baron was bending over the fire rearranging the logs

on the andirons. He looked up sharply and spoke in his strong nasal tone.

"Pardon! Madame la Baronne de Mortemer, j'ai l'honneur de vous presenter Monsieur le Docteur Carmichael."

The accent on the "doctor" was marked. A slight shadow came upon the lady's face. She answered, quietly:

"Yes, I know. The doctor has come to see me because I was ill. We will talk of that in a moment. But first I want to tell him who I am—and by another name. Dr. Carmichael, did your father ever speak to you of Jean Gordon?"

"Why, yes," he said, after an instant of thought. "it comes back to me now quite clearly. She was the young girl to whom he taught Latin when he first came here as a college instructor. He was very fond of her. There was one of her books in his library—I have it now—a little volume of Horace, with a few translations in verse written on the fly-leaves, and her name on the title-page—Jean Gordon. My father wrote under that, 'My best pupil, who left her lessons unfinished.' He was very fond of the book, and so I kept it when he died."

The lady's eyes grew moist, but the tears did not fall. They trembled in her voice.

"I was that Jean Gordon—a girl of fifteen—your father was the best man I ever knew. You look like him, but he was handsomer than you. Ah, no, I was not his best pupil, but his most wilful and ungrateful one. Did he never tell you of my running away—of the unjust suspicions that fell on him—of his voyage to Europe?"

"Never," answered Carmichael. "He only spoke, as I remember, of your beauty and your brightness, and of the good times that you all had when this old house was in its prime."

"Yes, yes," she said, quickly and with strong feeling, "they were good times, and he was a man of honour. He never took an unfair advantage, never boasted of a woman's favour, never tried to spare himself. He was an American man. I hope you are like him."

The Baron, who had been leaning on the mantel, crossed the room impatiently and stood beside the bed. He spoke in French again, dragging the words in his insistent, masterful voice, as if they were something heavy which he laid upon his wife.

Her grey eyes grew darker, almost black, with enlarging pupils. She raised herself on the pillows as if about to get up. Then she sank back again and said, with an evident effort:

"René, I must beg you not to speak in French again. The doctor does not understand it. We must be more courteous. And now I will tell him about my sudden illness to-night. It was the first time—like a flash of lighting—an ice-cold hand of pain——"

Even as she spoke a swift and dreadful change passed over her face. Her colour vanished in a morbid pallor; a cold sweat lay like death-dew on her forehead; her eyes were fixed on some impending horror; her lips, blue and rigid, were strained with an unspeakable, intolerable anguish. Her left arm stiffened as if it were gripped in a vise of pain. Her right hand fluttered over her heart, plucking at an unseen weight. It seemed as if an invisible, silent death-wind were quenching the flame of her life. It flickered in an agony of strangulation.

"Be quick," cried the doctor; "lay her head lower on the pillows, loosen her dress, warm her hands."

He had caught up his satchel, and was looking for a little vial. He found it almost empty. But there were four or five drops of the yellowish, oily liquid. He poured them on his handkerchief and held it close to the lady's mouth. She was still breathing regularly though slowly, and as she inhaled the pungent, fruity smell, like the odour of a jargonelle pear, a look of relief flowed over her face, her breathing deepened, her arm and her lips relaxed, the terror faded from her eyes.

He went to his satchel again and took out a bottle of white

tablets marked "Nitroglycerin." He gave her one of them, and when he saw her look of peace grow steadier, after a minute, he prepared the electric battery. Softly he passed the sponges charged with their mysterious current over her temples and her neck and down her slender arms and blue-veined wrists, holding them for a while in the palms of her hands, which grew rosy.

In all this the Baron had helped as he could, and watched closely, but without a word. He was certainly not indifferent; neither was he distressed; the expression of his black eyes and heavy, passionless face was that of presence of mind, self-control covering an intense curiosity. Carmichael conceived a vague sentiment of dislike for the man.

When the patient rested easily they stepped outside the room together for a moment.

"It is the *angina,* I suppose," droned the Baron, "hein? That is of great inconvenience. But I think it is the false one, that is much less grave—not truly dangerous, hein?"

"My dear sir," answered Carmichael, "who can tell the difference between a false and a true *angina pectoris,* except by a post-mortem? The symptoms are much alike, the result is sometimes identical, if the paroxysm is severe enough. But in this case I hope that you may be right. Your wife's illness is severe, dangerous, but not necessarily fatal. This attack has passed and may not recur for months or even years."

The lip-smile came back under the Baron's sullen eyes.

"Those are the good news, my dear doctor," said he, slowly. "Then we shall be able to travel soon, perhaps to-morrow or the next day. It is of an extreme importance. This place is insufferable to me. We have engagements in Washington—a gay season."

Carmichael looked at him steadily and spoke with deliberation.

"Baron, you must understand me clearly. This is a serious case. If I had not come in time your wife might be dead now. She cannot possibly be moved for a week, perhaps it

may take a month fully to restore her strength. After that she must have a winter of absolute quiet and repose."

The Frenchman's face hardened; his brows drew together in a black line, and he lifted his hand quickly with a gesture of irritation. Then he bowed.

"As you will, doctor! And for the present moment, what is it that I may have the honour to do for your patient?"

"Just now," said the doctor, "she needs a stimulant—a glass of sherry or of brandy, if you have it—and a hot-water bag—you have none? Well, then, a couple of bottles filled with hot water and wrapped in a cloth to put at her feet. Can you get them?"

The Baron bowed again, and went down the stairs. As Carmichael returned to the bedroom he heard the droning, insistent voice below calling "Gaspard, Gaspard!"

The great grey eyes were open as he entered the room, and there was a sense of release from pain and fear in them that was like the deepest kind of pleasure.

"Yes, I am much better," said she; "the attack has passed. Will it come again? No? Not soon, you mean. Well, that is good. You need not tell me what it is—time enough for that to-morrow. But come and sit by me. I want to talk to you. Your first name is——"

"Leroy," he answered. "But you are weak; you must not talk much."

"Only a little," she replied, smiling; "it does me good. Leroy was your mother's name—yes? It is not a Calvinton name. I wonder where your father met her. Perhaps in France when he came to look for me. But he did not find me—no, indeed—I was well hidden then—but he found your mother. You are young enough to be my son. Will you be a friend to me for your father's sake?"

She spoke gently, in a tone of infinite kindness and tender grace, with pauses in which a hundred unspoken recollections and appeals were suggetsed. The young man was deeply moved. He took her hand in his firm grasp.

"Gladly," he said, "and for your sake too. But now I want you to rest."

"Oh," she answered, "I am resting now. But let me talk a little more. It will not harm me. I have been through so much! Twice married—a great fortune to spend—all that the big world can give. But now I am very tired of the whirl. There is only one thing I want—to stay here in Calvinton. I rebelled against it once; but it draws me back. There is a strange magic in the place. Haven't you felt it? How do you explain it?"

"Yes," he said, "I have felt it surely, but I can't explain it, unless it is a kind of ancient peace that makes you wish to be at home here even while you rebel."

She nodded her head and smiled softly.

"That is it," she said, hesitating for a moment. "But my husband—you see he is a very strong man, and he loves the world, the whirling life—he took a dislike to this place at once. No wonder, with the house in such a state! But I have plenty of money—it will be easy to restore the house. Only, sometimes I think he cares more for the money than—but no matter what I think. He wishes to go on at once—to-morrow, if we can. I hate the thought of it. Is it possible for me to stay? Can you help me?"

"Dear lady," he answered, lifting her hand to his lips, "set your mind at rest. I have already told him that it is impossible for you to go for many days. You can arrange to move to the inn to-morrow, and stay there while you direct the putting of your house in order."

A sound in the hallway announced the return of the Baron and Gaspard with the hot-water bottles and the cognac. The doctor made his patient as comfortable as possible for the night, prepared a sleeping-draught, and gave directions for the use of the tablets in an emergency.

"Good night," he said, bending over her. "I will see you in the morning. You may count upon me."

"I do," she said, with her eyes resting on his; "thank you for all. I shall expect you—*au revoir.*"

As they went down the stairs he said to the Baron, "Remember, absolute repose is necessary. With that you are safe enough for to-night. But you may possibly need more of the nitrite of amyl. My vial is empty. I will write the prescription, if you will allow me."

"In the dining-room," said the Baron, taking up the lamp and throwing open the door of the back room on the right. The floor had been hastily swept and the rubbish shoved into the fireplace. The heavy chairs stood along the wall. But two of them were drawn up at the head of the long mahogany table, and dishes and table utensils from a travelling-basket were lying there, as if a late supper had been served.

"You see," said the Baron, drawling, "our banquet-hall! Madame and I have dined in this splendour to-night. Is it possible that you write here?"

His secret irritation, his insolence, his contempt spoke clearly enough in his tone. The remark was almost like an intentional insult. For a second Carmichael hesitated. "No," he thought, "why should I quarrel with him? He is only sullen. He can do no harm."

He pulled a chair to the foot of the table, took out his tablet and his fountain-pen, and wrote the prescription. Tearing off the leaf, he folded it crosswise and left it on the table.

In the hall, as he put on his coat he remembered the paper.

"My prescription," he said, "I must take it to the druggist to-night."

"Permit me," said the Baron, "the room is dark. I will take the paper, and procure the drug as I return from escorting the doctor to his residence."

He went into the dark room, groped about for a moment, and returned, closing the door behind him.

"Come, Monsieur," he said, "your work at the Château Gordon is finished for this night. I shall leave you with your-

self—at home, as you say—in a few moments. Gaspard—Gaspard, *fermez là porte à clè!*"

The strong nasal voice echoed through the house, and the servant ran lightly down the stairs. His master muttered a few sentences to him, holding up his right hand as he did so, with the five fingers extended, as if to impress something on the man's mind.

"Pardon," he said, turning to Carmichael, "that I speak always French, after the rebuke. But this time it is of necessity. I repeat the instruction for the pillules. One at each hour until eight o'clock—five, not more—it is correct? Come, then, our equipage is always harnessed, always ready, how convenient!"

The two men did not speak as the car rolled through the brumous night. A rising wind was sifting the fog. The moon had set. The loosened leaves came whirling, fluttering, sinking through the darkness like a flight of huge dying moths. Now and then they brushed the faces of the travellers with limp, moist wings.

The red night-lamp in the drug-store was still burning. Carmichael called the other's attention to it.

"You have the prescription?"

"Without doubt!" he answered. "After I have escorted you, I shall procure the drug."

The doctor's front door was lit up as he had left it. The light streamed out rather brightly and illumined the Baron's sullen black eyes and smiling lips as he leaned from the car, lifting his cap.

"A thousand thanks, my dear doctor, you have been excessively kind; yes, truly of an excessive goodness for us. It is a great pleasure—how do you tell it in English—it is a great pleasure to have met you. *Adieu.*"

"Till to-morrow morning!" said Carmichael, cheerfully, waving his hand.

The Baron stared at him curiously, and lifted his cap again.

"Adieu!" droned the insistent voice, and the great car slid into the dark.

IV

The next morning was of crystal. It was after nine when Carmichael drove his electric-phaeton down the leaf-littered street, where the country wagons and the decrepit hacks were already meandering placidly, and out along the highroad, between the still green fields. It seemed to him as if the experience of the past night were "such stuff as dreams are made of." Yet the impression of what he had seen and heard in that firelit chamber—of the eyes, the voice, the hand of that strangely lovely lady—of her vision of sudden death, her essentially lonely struggle with it, her touching words to him when she came back to life—all this was so vivid and unforgetable that he drove straight to Castle Gordon.

The great house was shut up like a tomb: every door and window was closed, except where half of one of the shutters had broken loose and hung by a single hinge. He drove around to the back. It was the same there. A cobweb was spun across the lower corner of the door and tiny drops of moisture jewelled it. Perhaps it had been made in the early morning. If so, no one had come out of the door since night.

Carmichael knocked, and knocked again. No answer. He called. No reply. Then he drove around to the portico with the tall white pillars and tried the front door. It was locked. He peered through the half-open window into the drawing-room. The glass was crusted with dirt and the room was dark. He was trying to make out the outlines of the huddled furniture when he heard a step behind him. It was the old farmer from the nearest cottage on the road.

"Mornin', doctor! I seen ye comin' in, and tho't ye might want to see the house."

"Good morning, Scudder! I do, if you'll let me in. But first tell me about these automobile tracks in the drive."

The old man gazed at him with a kind of dull surprise as if the question were foolish.

"Why, ye made 'em yerself, comin' up, didn't ye?"

"I mean those larger tracks—they were made by a much heavier car than mine."

"Oh," said the old man, nodding, "them was made by a big machine that come in here las' week. You see this house 's bin shet up 'bout ten years, ever sence ol' Jedge Gordon died. B'longs to Miss Jean—her that run off with the Eye-talyin. She kinder wants to sell it, and kinder not—ye see——"

"Yes," interrupted Carmichael, "but about that big machine—when did you say it was here?"

"P'raps four or five days ago; I think it was a We'nsday. Two fellers from Philadelfy—said they wanted to look at the house, tho't of buyin' it. So I bro't 'em in, but when they seen the outside of it they said they didn't want to look at it no more—too big and too crumbly!"

"And since then no one has been here?"

"Not a soul—leastways nobody that I seen. I don't s'pose you think o' buyin' the house, doc'! It's too lonely for an office, ain't it?"

"You're right, Scudder, much too lonely. But I'd like to look through the old place, if you will take me in."

The hall, with the two chairs and the table, on which a kitchen lamp with a half-inch of oil in it was standing, gave no sign of recent habitation. Carmichael glanced around him and hurried up the stairway to the bedroom. A tall four-poster stood in one corner, with a coverlet apparently hiding a mattress and some pillows. A dressing-table stood against the wall, and in the middle of the floor there were a few chairs. A half-open closet door showed a pile of yellow linen. The daylight sifted dimly into the room through the cracks of the shutters.

"Scudder," said Carmichael, "I want you to look around

carefully and tell me whether you see any signs of any one having been here lately."

The old man stared, and turned his eyes slowly about the room. Then he shook his head.

"Can't say as I do. Looks pretty much as it did when me and my wife breshed it up in October. Ye see it's kinder clean fer an old house—not much dust from the road here. That linen and that bed's bin here sence I c'n remember. Them burnt logs mus' be left over from old Jedge Gordon's time. He died in here. But what's the matter, doc'? Ye think tramps or burglers——"

"No," said Carmichael, "but what would you say if I told you that I was called here last night to see a patient, and that the patient was the Miss Jean Gordon of whom you have just told me?"

"What d'ye mean?" said the old man, gaping. Then he gazed at the doctor pityingly, and shook his head. "I know ye ain't a drinkin' man, doc', so I wouldn't say nothin'. But I guess ye bin dreamin'. Why, las' time Miss Jean writ to me—her name's Mortimer now, and her husband's a kinder Barrin or some sorter furrin noble,—she was in Paris, not mor'n two weeks ago! Said she was dyin' to come back to the ol' place agin, but she wa'n't none too well, and didn't guess she c'd manage it. Ef ye said ye seen her here las' night—why—well, I'd jest think ye'd bin dreamin'. P'raps ye're a little under the weather—bin workin' too hard?"

"I never was better, Scudder, but sometimes curious notions come to me. I wanted to see how you would take this one. Now we'll go downstairs again."

The old man laughed, but doubtfully, as if he was still puzzled by the talk, and they descended the creaking, dusty stairs. Carmichael turned at once into the dining-room.

The rubbish was still in the fireplace, the chairs ranged along the wall. There were no dishes on the long table; but at the head of it two chairs; and at the foot, one; and in

front of that, lying on the table, a folded bit of paper. Carmichael picked it up and opened it.

It was his prescription for the nitrite of amyl.

He hesitated a moment; then refolded the paper and put it in his vest-pocket.

Seated in his car, with his hand on the lever, he turned to Scudder, who was watching him with curious eyes.

"I'm very much obliged to you, Scudder, for taking me through the house. And I'll be more obliged to you if you'll just keep it to yourself—what I said to you about last night."

"Sure," said the old man, nodding gravely. "I like ye, doc', and that kinder talk might do ye harm here in Calvinton. We don't hold much to dreams and visions down this way. But, say, 'twas a mighty interestin' dream, wa'n't it? I guess Miss Jean hones for them white pillars, many a day—they sorter stand for old times. They draw ye, don't they?"

"Yes, my friend," said Carmichael as he moved the lever, "they speak of the past. There is a magic in those white pillars. They draw you."

"THE TOLL-HOUSE" *

By W. W. Jacobs

"It's all nonsense," said Jack Barnes. "Of course people have died in the house; people die in every house. As for the noises—wind in the chimney and rats in the wainscot are very convincing to a nervous man. Give me another cup of tea, Meagle."

"Lester and White are first," said Meagle who was presiding at the tea-table of the Three Feathers Inn. "You've had two."

Lester and White finished their cups with irritating slowness, pausing between sips to sniff the aroma, and to discover the sex and dates of arrival of the "strangers" which floated in some numbers in the beverage. Mr. Meagle served them to the brim and then turning to the grimly expectant Mr. Barnes blandly requested him to ring for hot water.

"We'll try and keep your nerves in their present healthy condition" he remarked. "For my part I have a sort of half-and-half belief in the supernatural."

"All sensible people have," said Lester. "An aunt of mine saw a ghost once."

White nodded.

"I had an uncle that saw one," he said.

"It always is somebody else that sees them," said Barnes.

"Well, there is a house," said Meagle, "a large house at an absurdly low rent, and nobody will take it. It has taken toll of at least one life of every family that has lived there—

* From *Sailor's Knots;* copyright, 1909, by Charles Scribner's Sons. Reprinted by permission of the author and the publishers.

however short the time—and since it has stood empty caretaker after caretaker has died there. The last caretaker died fifteen years ago."

"Exactly," said Barnes. "Long enough ago for legends to accumulate."

"I'll bet you a sovereign you won't spend the night there alone, for all your talk," said White, suddenly.

"And I," said Lester.

"No," said Barnes slowly. "I don't believe in ghosts nor in any supernatural things whatever; all the same I admit that I should not care to pass a night there alone."

"But why not?" inquired White.

"Wind in the chimney," said Meagle with a grin.

"Rats in the wainscot," chimed in Lester.

"As you like," said Barnes coloring.

"Suppose we all go," said Meagle. "Start after supper, and get there about eleven. We have been walking for ten days now without an adventure—except Barnes's discovery that ditchwater smells longest. It will be a novelty, at any rate, and, if we break the spell by all surviving, the grateful owner ought to come down handsome."

"Let's see what the landlord has to say about it first," said Lester. "There is no fun in passing a night in an ordinary empty house. Let us make sure that it is haunted."

He rang the bell, and, sending for the landlord, appealed to him in the name of our common humanity not to let them waste a night watching in a house in which spectres and hobgoblins had no part. The reply was more than reassuring, and the landlord, after describing with considerable art the exact appearance of a head which had been seen hanging out of a window in the moonlight, wound up with a polite but urgent request that they would settle his bill before they went.

"It's all very well for you young gentlemen to have your fun," he said indulgently; "but supposing as how you are

all found dead in the morning, what about me? It ain't called the Toll-House for nothing, you know."

"Who died there last?" inquired Barnes, with an air of polite derision.

"A tramp," was the reply. "He went there for the sake of half a crown, and they found him next morning hanging from the balusters, dead."

"Suicide," said Barnes. "Unsound mind."

The landlord nodded. "That's what the jury brought it in," he said slowly; "but his mind was sound enough when he went in there. I'd known him, off and on, for years. I'm a poor man, but I wouldn't spend the night in that house for a hundred pounds."

He repeated this remark as they started on their expedition a few hours later. They left as the inn was closing for the night; bolts shot noisily behind them, and, as the regular customers trudged slowly homewards, they set off at a brisk pace in the direction of the house. Most of the cottages were already in darkness, and lights in others went out as they passed.

"It seems rather hard that we have got to lose a night's rest in order to convince Barnes of the existence of ghosts" said White.

"It's in a good cause," said Meagle. "A most worthy object; and something seems to tell me that we shall succeed. You didn't forget the candles, Lester?"

"I have brought two," was the reply; all the old man could spare."

There was but little moon, and the night was cloudy. The road between high hedges was dark, and in one place, where it ran through a wood, so black that they twice stumbled in the uneven ground at the side of it.

"Fancy leaving our comfortable beds for this!" said White again. "Let me see; this desirable residential sepulchre lies to the right, doesn't it?"

"Farther on," said Meagle.

They walked on for some time in silence, broken only by White's tribute to the softness, the cleanliness, and the comfort of the bed which was receding farther and farther into the distance. Under Meagle's guidance they turned off at last to the right, and, after a walk of a quarter of a mile, saw the gates of the house before them.

The lodge was almost hidden by overgrown shrubs and the drive was choken with rank growths. Meagle leading, they pushed through it until the dark pile of the house loomed above them.

"There is a window at the back where we can get in, so the landlord says," said Lester, as they stood before the hall door.

"Window?" said Meagle. "Nonsense. Let's do the thing properly. Where's the knocker?"

He felt for it in the darkness and gave a thundering rat-tat-tat at the door.

"Don't play the fool," said Barnes crossly.

"Ghostly servants are all asleep," said Meagle gravely, "but *I'll* wake them up before I've done with them. It's scandalous keeping us out here in the dark."

He plied the knocker again, and the noise volleyed in the emptiness beyond. Then with a sudden exclamation he put out his hands and stumbled forward.

"Why, it was open all the time," he said, with an odd catch in his voice. "Come on."

"I don't believe it was open," said Lester, hanging back. "Somebody is playing us a trick."

"Nonsense," said Meagle sharply. "Give me a candle. Thanks. Who's got a match?"

Barnes produced a box and struck one, and Meagle, shielding the candle with his hand, led the way forward to the foot of the stairs. "Shut the door, somebody," he said, "there's too much draught."

"It is shut," said White, glancing behind him.

Meagle fingered his chin. "Who shut it?" he inquired, looking from one to the other. "Who came in last?"

"I did," said Lester, "but I don't remember shutting it—perhaps I did, though."

Meagle, about to speak, thought better of it, and, still carefully guarding the flame, began to explore the house, with the others close behind. Shadows danced on the walls and lurked in the corners as they proceeded. At the end of the passage they found a second staircase and ascending it slowly gained the first floor.

"Careful!" said Meagle, as they gained the landing.

He held the candle forward and showed where the balusters had broken away. Then he peered curiously into the void beneath.

"This is where the tramp hanged himself, I suppose," he said thoughtfully.

"You've got an unwholesome mind," said White, as they walked on. "This place is quite creepy enough without your remembering that. Now let's find a comfortable room and have a little nip of whiskey apiece and a pipe. How will this do?"

He opened a door at the end of the passage and revealed a small square room. Meagle led the way with the candle, and, first melting a drop or two of tallow, stuck it on the mantelpiece. The others seated themselves on the floor and watched pleasantly as White drew from his pocket a small bottle of whiskey and a tin cup.

"H'm! I've forgotten the water," he exclaimed.

"I'll soon get some," said Meagle.

He tugged violently at the bell-handle, and the rusty jangling of a bell sounded from a distant kitchen. He rang again.

"Don't play the fool," said Barnes roughly.

Meagle laughed. "I only wanted to convince you," he said kindly. "There ought to be, at any rate, one ghost in the servants' hall."

Barnes held up his hand for silence.

"Yes?" said Meagle with a grin at the other two. "Is anybody coming?"

"Suppose we drop this game and go back" said Barnes suddenly. "I don't believe in spirits, but nerves are outside anybody's command. You may laugh as you like, but it really seemed to me that I heard a door open below and steps on the stairs."

His voice was drowned in a roar of laughter.

"He is coming round," said Meagle with a smirk. "By the time I have done with him he will be a confirmed believer. Well, who will go and get some water? Will you, Barnes?"

"No," was the reply.

"If there is any it might not be safe to drink after all these years," said Lester. "We must do without it."

Meagle nodded, and taking a seat on the floor held out his hand for the cup. Pipes were lit and the clean, wholesome smell of tobacco filled the room. White produced a pack of cards; talk and laughter rang through the room and died away reluctantly in distant corridors.

"Empty rooms always delude me into the belief that I possess a deep voice," said Meagle. "To-morrow I——"

He started up with a smothered exclamation as the light went out suddenly and something struck him on the head. The others sprang to their feet. Then Meagle laughed.

"It's the candle," he exclaimed. "I didn't stick it enough."

Barnes struck a match and relighting the candle stuck it on the mantelpiece, and sitting down took up his cards again.

"What was I going to say?" said Meagle. "Oh, I know; to-morrow I——"

"Listen!" said White, laying his hand on the other's sleeve. "Upon my word I really thought I heard a laugh."

"Look here!" said Barnes. "What do you say to going back? I've had enough of this. I keep fancying that I hear things too; sounds of something moving about in the passage outside. I know it's only fancy, but it's uncomfortable."

"You go if you want to," said Meagle, "and we will play dummy. Or you might ask the tramp to take your hand for you as you go downstairs."

Barnes shivered and exclaimed angrily. He got up and, walking to the half-closed door, listened.

"Go outside," said Meagle winking at the other two. "I'll dare you to go down to the hall door and back by yourself."

Barnes came back and bending forward lit his pipe at the candle.

"I am nervous but rational," he said, blowing out a thin cloud of smoke. "My nerves tell me that there is something prowling up and down the long passage outside; my reason tells me that it is all nonsense. Where are my cards?"

He sat down again, and taking up his hand, looked through it carefully and led.

"Your play, White," he said after a pause.

White made no sign.

"Why, he is asleep," said Meagle. "Wake up, old man. Wake up and play."

Lester, who was sitting next to him, took the sleeping man by the arm and shook him, gently at first and then with some roughness; but White, with his back against the wall and his head bowed, made no sign. Meagle bawled in his ear and then turned a puzzled face to the others.

"He sleeps like the dead," he said, grimacing. "Well, there are still three of us to keep each other company."

"Yes," said Lester, nodding. "Unless—— Good Lord! suppose——"

He broke off and eyed them trembling.

"Suppose what?" inquired Meagle.

"Nothing," stammered Lester. "Let's wake him. Try him again. *White! White!*"

"It's no good," said Meagle seriously; "there's something wrong about that sleep."

"That's what I meant," said Lester; "and if *he* goes to sleep like that, why shouldn't——"

Meagle sprang to his feet. "Nonsense," he said roughly. "He's tired out; that's all. Still, let's take him up and clear out. You take his legs and Barnes will lead the way with the candle. *Yes? Who's that?*"

He looked up quickly towards the door. "Thought I heard somebody tap," he said with a shamefaced laugh. "Now, Lester, up with him. One, two—Lester! Lester!"

He sprang forward too late; Lester, with his face buried in his arms, had rolled over on the floor fast asleep, and his utmost efforts failed to awaken him."

"He—is—asleep," he stammered. "Asleep!"

Barnes, who had taken the candle from the mantelpiece, stood peering at the sleepers in silence and dropping tallow over the floor.

"We must get out of this," said Meagle. "Quick!"

Barnes hesitated. "We can't leave them here——" he began.

"We must," said Meagle in strident tones. "If you go to sleep I shall go—— Quick! Come."

He seized the other by the arm and strove to drag him to the door. Barnes shook him off, and putting the candle back on the mantelpiece, tried again to arouse the sleepers.

"It's no good," he said at last, and, turning from them, watched Meagle. "Don't you go to sleep," he said anxiously.

Meagle shook his head, and they stood for some time in uneasy silence. "May as well shut the door," said Barnes at last.

He crossed over and closed it gently. Then at a scuffling noise behind him he turned and saw Meagle in a heap on the hearthstone.

With a sharp catch in his breath he stood motionless. Inside the room the candle, fluttering in the draught, showed dimly the grotesque attitudes of the sleepers. Beyond the door there seemed to his overwrought imagination a strange and stealthy unrest. He tried to whistle, but his lips were

parched, and in a mechanical fashion he stooped, and began to pick up the cards which littered the floor.

He stopped once or twice and stood with bent head listening. The unrest outside seemed to increase; a loud creaking sounded from the stairs.

"Who is there?" he cried loudly.

The creaking ceased. He crossed to the door and flinging it open, strode out into the corridor. As he walked his fears left him suddenly.

"Come on!" he cried with a low laugh. "All of you! All of you! Show your faces—your infernal ugly faces! Don't skulk!"

He laughed again and walked on; and the heap in the fireplace put out his head tortoise fashion and listened in horror to the retreating footsteps. Not until they had become inaudible in the distance did the listeners' features relax.

"Good Lord, Lester, we've driven him mad," he said in a frightened whisper. "We must go after him."

There was no reply. Meagle sprung to his feet.

"Do you hear?" he cried. "Stop your fooling now; this is serious. White! Lester! Do you hear?"

He bent and surveyed them in angry bewilderment. "All right," he said in a trembling voice. "You won't frighten me, you know."

He turned away and walked with exaggerated carelessness in the direction of the door. He even went outside and peeped through the crack, but the sleepers did not stir. He glanced into the blackness behind, and then came hastily into the room again.

He stood for a few seconds regarding them. The stillness in the house was horrible; he could not even hear them breathe. With a sudden resolution he snatched the candle from the mantelpiece and held the flame to White's finger. Then as he reeled back stupefied the footsteps again became audible.

He stood with the candle in his shaking hand listening.

He heard them ascending the farther staircase, but they stopped suddenly as he went to the door. He walked a little way along the passage, and they went scurrying down the stairs and then at a jog-trot along the corridor below. He went back to the main staircase, and they ceased again.

For a time he hung over the balusters, listening and trying to pierce the blackness below; then slowly, step by step, he made his way downstairs, and, holding the candle above his head, peered about him.

"Barnes!" he called. "Where are you?"

Shaking with fright, he made his way along the passage, and summoning up all his courage pushed open doors and gazed fearfully into empty rooms. Then, quite suddenly, he heard the footsteps in front of him.

He followed slowly for fear of extinguishing the candle, until they led him at last into a vast bare kitchen with damp walls and a broken floor. In front of him a door leading into an inside room had just closed. He ran towards it and flung it open, and a cold air blew out the candle. He stood aghast.

"Barnes!" he cried again. "Don't be afraid! It is I—Meagle!"

There was no answer. He stood gazing into the darkness, and all the time the idea of something close at hand watching was upon him. Then suddenly the steps broke out overhead again.

He drew back hastily, and passing through the kitchen groped his way along the narrow passages. He could now see better in the darkness, and finding himself at last at the foot of the staircase began to ascend it noiselessly. He reached the landing just in time to see a figure disappear round the angle of a wall. Still careful to make no noise, he followed the sound of the steps until they led him to the top floor, and he cornered the chase at the end of a short passage.

"Barnes!" he whispered. "Barnes!"

Something stirred in the darkness. A small circular win-

dow at the end of the passage just softened the blackness and revealed the dim outlines of a motionless figure. Meagle, in place of advancing, stood almost as still as a sudden horrible doubt took possession of him. With his eyes fixed on the shape in front he fell back slowly and, as it advanced upon him, burst into a terrible cry.

"Barnes! For God's sake! Is it *you?*"

The echoes of his voice left the air quivering, but the figure before him paid no heed. For a moment he tried to brace his courage up to endure its approach, then with a smothered cry he turned and fled.

The passages wound like a maze, and he threaded them blindly in a vain search for the stairs. If he could get down and open the hall door——

He caught his breath in a sob; the steps had begun again. At a lumbering trot they clattered up and down the bare passages, in and out, up and down, as though in search of him. He stood appalled, and then as they drew near entered a small room and stood behind the door as they rushed by. He came out and ran swiftly and noiselessly in the other direction, and in a moment the steps were after him. He found the long corridor and raced along it at top speed. The stairs he knew were at the end, and with the steps close behind he descended them in blind haste. The steps gained on him, and he shrank to the side to let them pass, still continuing his headlong flight. Then suddenly he seemed to slip off the earth into space.

Lester awoke in the morning to find the sunshine streaming into the room, and White sitting up and regarding with some perplexity a badly blistered finger.

"Where are the others?" inquired Lester.

"Gone, I suppose," said White. "We must have been asleep."

Lester arose, and stretching his stiffened limbs, dusted his clothes with his hands, and went out into the corridor. White

followed. At the noise of their approach a figure which had been lying asleep at the other end sat up and revealed the face of Barnes. "Why, I've been asleep," he said in surprise. "I don't remember coming here. How did I get here?"

"Nice place to come for a nap," said Lester, severely, as he pointed to the gap in the balusters. "Look here! Another yard and where would you have been?"

He walked carelessly to the edge and looked over. In response to his startled cry the others drew near and all three stood gazing at the dead man below.

Reading List

Stories of Mood: Fantasy

Abdullah, Achmed. "Tartar."
Andrews, Mary S. "The Fifth of October."
Bierce, Ambrose. "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge."
Chambers, Robert W. "Demoiselle D'Ys," "The Carpet of Belshazzar," "The Maker of Moons," "The Tree of Dreams."
Gautier, Théophile. "The Mummy's Foot."
Gerould, Katherine. "On the Stair-Case."
Hawthorne, Nathaniel. "Rappaccini's Daughter."
Henry, O. "The Furnished Room."
Hichens, Robert. "A Tribute of Souls," "The Charmer of Snakes."
Jacobs, W. W. "The Monkey's Paw."
Kipling, Rudyard. "The Mark of the Beast."
London, Jack. "The Unparalleled Invasion."
Mérimée, Prosper. "The Venus of Ille."
Morris, Gouverneur. "The Incandescent Lily," "Back There in the Grass."
O'Brien, Fitz. "The Diamond Lens," "What Was It? a Mystery."
Page, Thomas Nelson. "The Strangers' Pew."
Pain, Barry. "Exchange," "The Glass of Supreme Moments."
Poe, Edgar Allan. "Ligeia," "The Masque of the Red Death."
Post, Melville D. "The Laughter of Allah," "The Mystery at the Blue Villa."
Pushkin, Alexander. "The Queen of Spades."
Stevenson, Robert Louis. "The Bottle Imp."
Wells, H. G. "The Stolen Bacilli," "The Strange Orchid."

NOTES

For the titles of the volumes of short stories by the authors mentioned below see page 410 ff.

Page 1

JOHN RUSSELL, born at Davenport, Iowa, carries on a long family tradition of journalism and authorship. After schooling in Brooklyn and Chicago and Northwestern University he made a tour of the world, returning to become a reporter in New York City. During the war he served as an agent of the committee on Public Information. The volume from which "The Red Mark" is taken was originally issued in 1919 under the title of *The Red Mark*, but attracted little attention. Published in England in 1921 under the title of *Where the Pavement Ends*, it immediately became one of the most talked-of American books abroad. Its European reception has encouraged the publisher to reissue it in this country under its new title.

Page 39

THOMAS BURKE was born in 1887 in London, where he now resides. After many discouragements he jumped into popularity in 1916 with his remarkable collection of stories of London's Chinatown—Limehouse. No less than ten publishers refused the book before Mr. Grant Richards saw its possibilities and brought it out in 1916. Besides his two volumes of stories Mr. Burke has published a number of volumes of sketches of his beloved London and its environs and several volumes of verse. For a time he was an antiquarian bookseller; later he became the assistant editor of the odd publication called *Answers*. At the present time he is acting as a literary advisor to a London publisher.

Page 54

MELVILLE DAVISSON POST was born in West Virginia in 1871. Since taking his law degree at the State University he has practiced his profession at Grafton, West Virginia. He is prominent in the political and legal circles of his state. A growing list of volumes

of stories of crime detection indicate his intense interest in the relation of law to crime. The publication of *Uncle Abner* in 1918 won him recognition as one of the greatest masters of the detective story since Edgar Allan Poe.

Page 69

ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1859. Upon graduation from the University of Edinburgh he took up medicine, but his success as a writer caused him to turn to the profession of literature. He was knighted in 1902. His greatest achievement, of course, was the creation of Sherlock Holmes, who is often said to be the most famous fictional character in the world today. To see how closely the Poe tradition in the detective story has been followed compare Poe's character Dupin with Doyle's Sherlock Holmes; Poe's stories "The Purloined Letter" and "The Gold-Bug" with Doyle's "A Scandal in Bohemia" and "The Dancing Men." It may be interesting to compare the story "How It Happened" with Mr. Percival Wilde's adaptation and dramatization of the same idea in his one-act play, "Dawn" in the volume of the same title (Holt).

Page 74

SUSAN GLASPELL, born in 1882 in Iowa and a graduate of Drake University, was for a number of years a newspaper reporter. More recently, with her husband, George Cram Cook, she has been associated with the Provincetown Players. Her best known novel is *The Glory of the Conquered*. Her most significant work has been in the one-act play. *Plays*, issued in 1920 (Small, Maynard), contains in "Trifles" her dramatized version of "A Jury of Her Peers." "Trifles" is frequently referred to as the greatest one-act play yet written by an American.

Page 101

FANNIE HURST was born at Hamilton, Ohio, in 1889, although she "was returned to St. Louis while still in the beety, underdone infantile stage." The many youthful manuscripts with which she flooded the magazines indicate that she had early determined upon her career. After graduating from Washington University in 1909 she went to New York, where she did some graduate work in Columbia. She made her way slowly; in fact, one magazine that later featured her work turned down no less than thirty-two manuscripts from her. In order to get her material at first hand she lived briefly

many of the experiences that enter into her stories, being at various times an actress, a waitress, a department store clerk, a factory girl. By 1914, with the publication of her first volume of short stories, she had her millions of readers. *Star Dust* (1921) is her one attempt at the novel. She was married to Jacques S. Danielson, pianist and composer, in 1914.

Page 135

Lincoln Colcord was born at sea off Cape Horn on August 14, 1883. He sprang from five generations of seafarers and spent the first fourteen years of his life at sea with his father—mostly on voyages to China. He graduated from the Searsport (Maine) High School and spent several years in study at the University of Maine. After a brief experience as a civil engineer he turned to newspaper work, becoming a staff editor on the Philadelphia *Public Ledger* and, in 1919, associate editor of *The Nation*. He is the author of a thrilling story of the sea, *The Drifting Diamond*, in which reappears Lee Fu, the remarkable Chinese character introduced in the volume *The Game of Life and Death*.

Page 162

Irvin Cobb was born at Paducah, Kentucky, in 1876. After rather indifferent schooling he took up newspaper work and eventually became a star reporter in New York City. Today he is one of the best known magazine writers and lecturers in America and is generally regarded as one of the greatest living American humorists. His mastery of the story of humor is matched, however, by his mastery of the story of the grim and terrible. Besides his growing list of books of short stories he has a number of volumes of his experiences as a war correspondent in the World War.

Page 180

Mrs. Helen Reinsnyder Martin was born at Lancaster, Pennsylvania, in 1868. She took special courses in English at both Swarthmore and Radcliffe. She has written many short stories and novels dealing with the Pennsylvania Dutch, whom she knows so well. The novel that has brought her the greatest fame is *Tillie: A Mennonite Maid*, published in 1914. It has more recently been dramatized and been made into a successful play for the distinguished English actress Patricia Collinge. Another novel, *Barnabetta*, was dramatized and renamed *Erstwhile Susan* and has become one of the popular plays of Mrs. Fiske.

Page 194

KONRAD BERCOVICI was born June 23, 1882, in Dobrudgea, Rumania. "Educated there and in the streets of Paris. 'In other cities it was completed as far as humanly possible.' Profession: organist. Chief interests: people, horses, and gardens. First story printed at the age of twelve in a Rumanian magazine. Author of *Crimes of Charity* and *Dust of New York*. Lives in New York City." (Quoted from O'Brien's *Best Short Stories of 1921*.)

Page 216

WILBUR DANIEL STEELE was born in Greensboro, North Carolina, in 1886. He was educated at the University of Denver. He has studied art both in this country and abroad. A great many of his stories—including *Storm*, a novel—deal with the Portuguese fishing folk of the New England Coast.

Page 239

HUGH MACNAIR KAHLER was born in Philadelphia in 1883. He was educated at home and in the public and high schools of Buffalo. In 1904 he took his B. A. degree from Princeton. He was in business until 1916. Being especially interested in foreign trade, he founded and edited a number of journals, including *How to Export*. He was one of the founders of the Latin-American Chamber of Commerce and of The American Manufacturers' Export Association. Since 1916 he has devoted his time to writing and farming. He has published many short stories since 1914, including twenty-three that have appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post*. He is the co-author with Holworthy Hall of *The Six Best Cellars*, a humorous novel published in 1919.

Page 275

JOHN TAINTOR FOOTE was born in Leadville, Colorado, March 29, 1881. While preparing for the Boston School of Technology he developed what his parents regarded as a talent for drawing and at the age of eighteen was allowed to suspend his efforts towards a scientific education to study art. For the last eight years he has been writing short stories and plays. His first play, "Toby's Bow," was produced in New York in 1919. Among his books are *Blister Jones, Dumbbell of Brookfield*, and *The Look of Eagles*. His publishers will soon bring out *The Song of the Dragon* and *Patricia and Others*.

Page 288

STEPHEN FRENCH WHITMAN was born in Philadelphia on January 10, 1880. He was educated at Lawrenceville School and Princeton University. For three years he wrote special articles for the New York *Sun*. Since then he has been writing novels and short stories. An unusually successful story of his is "Amazement," which appeared in *Harper's Magazine* for October, 1919. His latest novel, just issued, is *Sacrifice*.

Page 313

ROY OCTAVUS COHEN was born at Charleston, South Carolina, in 1891. He graduated from Clemson College in 1911. After experience first as a civil engineer, next as a lawyer, and later as a newspaper reporter, he turned to writing and has devoted himself exclusively to it since 1915. Besides three volumes of short stories he has to his credit several novels of mystery and a play, *The Crimson Alibi*, that has proved very successful.

Page 349

NEWTON BOOTH TARKINGTON was born in Indianapolis, Indiana, in 1869. After spending a year at Purdue University he went to Princeton to complete his college education. He first attracted attention with his novel, *The Gentleman from Indiana*. One of the most delightful things he ever wrote is *Cherry*, a novelette that is not as well known as it should be. In 1920 he won the Pulitzer Prize for the best novel of the year with *The Magnificent Ambersons*. His short story, *Monsieur Beaucaire*, has had remarkable success; it has recently been made into a delightful light opera. However, his fame in the short story rests primarily upon his fictions of such youngsters at Penrod and Willie Baxter.

Page 370

HENRY VAN DYKE was born at Germantown, Pennsylvania, in 1852. He graduated from Princeton in 1873. After serving as a pastor of several famous Presbyterian churches he returned to Princeton in 1900 as professor of English, a position which he now holds. During the World War he served as our minister to Holland. Many honorary degrees have been conferred upon him both here and abroad. Numerous volumes of essays and sketches of outdoor life and books of verse have come from his pen; but probably he is best known for his two short stories: "The Other Wise Man" and "The Lost Word," both of which have been translated into almost every language on earth.

Page 389

WILLIAM WYMATH JACOBS was born in London in 1863. He entered the Civil Service as a clerk in the Savings Bank Department and served there until 1899. He has devoted himself in his fictions—both novels and short stories—almost exclusively to sailor folk. *The Skipper's Wooing* and *At Sunwich Port* represent his best work in the novel. His most noteworthy characteristic is humor; in fact, he is generally recognized as one of the greatest writers of humor of the present day. Like Irvin Cobb, the American humorist, he has cultivated another field in short fiction, the story of fantasy and tragedy. His story, "The Monkey's Paw," is probably the finest thing he ever wrote.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL LISTS

Names and Addresses of Publishers Referred to in Bibliographical Lists

D. Appleton and Company, 29-35 West 32nd Street, New York.
American Book Company, Cincinnati.
Atlantic Monthly Press, 8 Arlington Street, Boston.
Bobbs-Merrill Company, Indianapolis.
Boni and Liveright, 105 West 40th Street, New York.
Brentano's, 5th Avenue and 28th Street, New York.
Century Company, 353 4th Avenue, New York.
Dodd, Mead and Company, 4th Avenue and 30th Street, New York.
George H. Doran Company, 244 Madison Avenue, New York.
Doubleday, Page & Company, Garden City, New York.
E. P. Dutton & Company, 681 Fifth Avenue, New York.
Ginn and Company, 15 Ashburton Place, Boston.
Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1 West 47th Street, New York.
Harper & Brothers, Franklin Square, New York.
D. C. Heath and Company, Boston.
Henry Holt and Company, 19 West 44th Street, New York.
Home Correspondence School, Springfield, Mass.
Houghton Mifflin Company, 4 Park Place, Boston.
B. W. Huebsch, Inc., 116 West 13th Street, New York.
A. A. Knopf, Inc., 220 West 42nd Street, New York.
John Lane Company, 782-86 Sixth Avenue, New York.
Little, Brown & Company, 34 Beacon Street, Boston.
Longmans, Green and Company, 55 Fifth Avenue, New York.
Robert M. McBride Company, 7 West 16th Street, New York.
A. C. McClurg & Co., 218 South Wabash Avenue, Chicago.
The Macmillan Company, 64-66 Fifth Avenue, New York.
Oxford University Press, 35 West 32nd Street, New York.
G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2 West 45th Street, New York.
Charles Scribner's Sons, 5th Avenue at 48th Street, New York.
Small, Maynard & Company, 41 Mt. Vernon Street, Boston.
Frederick A. Stokes Company, 443-49 Fourth Avenue, New York.

History and Criticism of the Short Story

Baldwin, Charles S. *American Short Stories.* Longmans, 1904. Introduction.

CANBY, HENRY S. *The Short Story in English.* Holt, 1909.
——— *A Study of the Short Story.* Holt, 1913. Introduction.
DAWSON, W. J., and DAWSON, CONINGSBY. *The Great English Short Story Writers.* In two volumes. Harper, 1910. Introduction.
HAMILTON, CLAYTON. *A Manual of the Art of Fiction.* Doubleday, 1918. Chapters X and XI.
JESSUP, ALEXANDER, and CANBY, HENRY S. *The Book of the Short Story.* Appleton, 1903. Introduction.
LIEBERMANN, E. *The American Short Story.* The Editor Company (Ridgewood, New Jersey), 1912.
MATTHEWS, BRANDER. *The Philosophy of the Short-Story.* Longmans, 1901.
——— *The Short-Story, Specimens Illustrating Its Development.* American, 1907. Introduction.
PAIN, BARRY. *The Short Story.* Doran, 1916.
PERRY, BLISS. *A Study of Prose Fiction.* Houghton, 1921. Chapter XII.
SMITH, C. ALPHONSO. *The American Short Story.* Ginn, 1912.

TECHNIQUE OF THE SHORT STORY

ALBRIGHT, EVELYN M. *The Short-Story, Its Principles and Structure.* Macmillan, 1907.
BAKER, HARRY T. *The Contemporary Short-Story.* Heath, 1916.
BARRETT, C. R. *Short-Story Writing.* Doubleday, 1898.
CLARK, GLENN. *A Manual of the Short-Story Art.* Macmillan, 1922.
COOPER, FREDERICK TABER. *The Craftsmanship of Writing.* Dodd, 1911.
CROSS, E. A. *The Short Story.* McClurg, 1914.
ESENWEIN, J. BERG, and CHAMBERS. *The Art of Story-Writing.* Home Correspondence School.
ESENWEIN, J. BERG. *Writing the Short-Story.* Hinds and Noble (New York), 1909.
FOWLER, NATHANIEL C. *The Art of Short-Story Writing.* Sully and Kleinteich (New York), 1913.
GERWIG, G. W. *The Art of the Short Story.* The Werner Co. (Akron, Ohio), 1909.
GRABO, CARL. *The Art of the Short Story.* Scribner, 1914.
HAMILTON, CLAYTON. *A Manual of the Art of Fiction.* Doubleday, 1921. Chapters X and XI.
JORDON, MODESTE H. *The Art of Short Story Writing Simplified.* The Hannis Jordon Company (New York), 1913.
MAXCY, CARROL L. *Rhetorical Principles of Narration.* Houghton, 1911.

NEAL, ROBERT W. *Short Stories in the Making.* Oxford.
NOTESTEIN, LILLIAN, and DUNN, WALDO. *The Modern Short-Story.* A. S. Barnes Company (New York), 1914.
PAIN, BARRY. *The Short Story.* Doran, 1916.
PHILLIPS, H. *Art in Short Story Narration.* Stanhope-Dodge Publishing Company (Larchmont, New York), 1913.
——— *The Plot of the Short Story.* Stanhope-Dodge, 1912.
——— *The Universal Plot Catalogue.* Stanhope-Dodge, 1916.
PITKIN, WALTER B. *The Art and Business of Story Writing.* Macmillan, 1912.
SMITH, LEWIS W. *Writing the Short Story.* Heath, 1902.
TAYLOR, JOSEPH. *Composition in Narration.* Holt, 1910.
WELLS, CAROLYN. *The Technique of the Mystery Story.* Home Correspondence School, 1913.
WILLIAMS, BLANCHE COLTON. *A Handbook of Story Writing.* Dodd, 1917.

VOLUMES OF SHORT STORIES

The date in each case is the copyright date of the volume consulted, and in a few cases this will not be the same as the date of first publication.

In accordance with the plan of this collection reference is made only to *volumes* of short stories. In case of a story that may be found in several books reference is made only to that one which is generally most accessible. Of course many stories mentioned by title may be located in back numbers of magazines. The most useful reference books for this purpose are: *Index to Short Stories*, by Ina Ten Eyck (White Plains, New York: H. W. Wilson Company, 1915); *The Standard Index of Short Stories: 1900-1914*, by Frances J. Hannigan (Small, Maynard, 1918); and the various volumes of Edward J. O'Brien's *Best Short Stories and Yearbook of the American Short Story.*

An attempt has been made wherever possible to characterize in a word or two the general nature of a volume. These characterizations are in parenthesis after the title, in each case.

Throughout italics have been used to indicate titles of volumes and quotation marks to indicate individual stories.

ABBOTT, ELEANOR. *The Sick-a-Bed Lady.* Century, 1911.

ABDULLAH, ACHMED. *The Honourable Gentleman.* Putnam, 1919. Title story, "The Hatchetman," "A Simple Act of Piety," "Cobbler's Wax." (Chinatown.)

———. *Wings.* McCann, 1920. "Tartar," "Silence." (Fantasy.)

ADE, GEORGE. *In Babel.* Doubleday, 1903. (Chicago.)

ALDRICH, THOMAS BAILEY. *Marjorie Daw and Other People.* Houghton, 1885. Title Story.

———. *Two Bites at a Cherry.* Houghton, 1894. "Goliath."

ALLEN, JAMES LANE. *The Flute and the Violin.* Macmillan, 1900. (Kentucky.) Title story and "Old King Solomon of Kentucky."

———. *A Kentucky Cardinal.* Macmillan, 1900.

ANDERSON, SHERWOOD. *Winesburg, Ohio.* Huebsch, 1919. "The Untold Lie," "Death," "Sophistication," "Departure." (Ohio.)

———. *The Triumph of the Egg.* Huebsch, 1921.

ANDREWS, MARY SHIPMAN. *The Eternal Feminine.* Scribner, 1916. Title story and "The Fifth of October."

———. *The Eternal Masculine.* Scribner, 1913.

———. *The Perfect Tribute.* Scribner, 1908. (Lincoln.)
———. *The Three Things.* Little, 1915. (World War.)
ANDREYEV, LEONID. *The Little Angel.* Knopf, 1916. (Russia.)
ARTZIBASHEF, MICHAEL. *The Millionaire.* Huebsch, 1915. "Nina."
———. *Tales of the Revolution.* Huebsch, 1917. (Russia.)
ATHERTON, GERTRUDE. *The Splendid Idle Forties.* Stokes, 1902. "The Pearls of Loreto," "The Ears of Twenty Americans." (California.)
AUMONIER, STACY. *The Friends.* Century, 1917. Title story. (England.)
———. *The Golden Windmill.* Macmillan, 1921. Title story and "Old Iron."
BACON, JOSEPHINE DASKAM. *The Madness of Philip.* Doubleday, 1902. Title story. (Youth.)
———. *Square Peggy.* Appleton, 1919. "Comrades in Arms." (World War.)
BAILEY, H. C. *Call Mr. Fortune.* Dutton, 1921. "The Nice Girl." (Detective.)
BALZAC, HONORÉ DE. *Short Stories.* Boni, 1917. "Doomed to Live" (sometimes called "The Executioner" and "El Verdugo"), "The Unknown Masterpiece," "Christ in Flanders," "La Grande Brétêche," "A Passion in the Desert." (French.)
BARRIE, JAMES M. *Auld Licht Idylls.* Scribner, 1897. "The Courting of T'nowhead's Bell." (Scotland.)
———. *Two of Them.* Lovell, 1893. "The Inconsiderate Waiter."
———. *A Window in Thrums.* Scribner, 1896. "How Gavin Birse Put it to Mag Lawrie." (Scotland.)
BAXTER, BEVERLEY. *The Blower of Bubbles.* Appleton, 1920. Title story, "The Man Who Scoffed," "The Airy Prince," "Mr. Craighouse of New York, Satirist." (World War.)
BEACH, REX. *The Crimson Gardenia.* Harper, 1916. Title story, "Rope's End," "The Brand." (Adventure.)
———. *Laughing Bill Hyde.* Harper, 1917. Title story, "The North Wind's Malice," "His Stock in Trade," "Running Elk." (Far North.)
BEACH, REX. *Pardners.* Doubleday, 1905. "The Test," "The Shyness of Shorty."
BERCOVICI, KONRAD. *Crimes of Charity.* Knopf, 1917.
———. *Dust of New York.* Boni, 1919. (New York.)
———. *Ghitza and Other Romances of Gypsy Blood.* Boni, 1921. Title story, "Vlad's Son," "Yahde, the Proud One," "Tinka," "Fanutza," "Hazi, Wife of Sender Surtuck," "The Law of the Lawless," "Yancu Lautaru." (Gypsy.)
BIERCE, AMBROSE. *Can Such Things Be?* Boni, 1918. (Fantasy.)

———. *In the Midst of Life.* Boni, 1918. "An Occurrence at Owk Creek Bridge." (Fantasy).

BLACKWOOD, ALGERNON. *Day and Night Stories.* Dutton, 1917. (Fantasy.)

———. *The Listener and Other Stories.* Dutton, 1917.

BOTTOME, PHYLLIS. *The Derelict.* Century, 1917. "Ironstone," "An Awkward Turn." (England.)

BROWN, ALICE. *Country Neighbors.* Houghton, 1910. "The Auction." (New England.)

———. *A County Road.* Houghton, 1906. "A Day Off." (New England.)

———. *The Flying Teuton.* Macmillan, 1918. Title Story. (World War.)

———. *Homespun and Gold.* Macmillan, 1920. "The Wedding Ring," "Mary Felicia," "The Return of Father," "The Deserters," "The House of the Bride," "A Question of Wills," "The Path of Stars," "The Widow's Third," "White Pebbles." (New England.)

———. *Meadow Grass.* Houghton, 1895. "Told in the Poorhouse," "Joint Owners in Spain."

———. *Vanishing Points.* Macmillan, 1913. "The Master," "The Flight of the Mouse."

———. *Tiverton Tales.* Houghton, 1899.

BRUBAKER, HOWARD. *Ranny—Otherwise Randolph Harrington Dukes.* Harper, 1917. (Youth.)

BUNNER, H. C. *The Stories of: Short Sixes.* Scribner, 1890. "The Love Letters of Smith," "A Sisterly Scheme." (Humor.)

BURKE, THOMAS. *Limehouse Nights.* McBride, 1917. "The Chink and the Child," "The Gorilla and the Girl." (London Chinatown.)

———. *More Limehouse Nights.* Doran, 1921. "The Yellow Scarf," "A Game of Poker," "The Heart of a Child," "The Dumb Wife," "The Perfect Girl," "The Affair at the Warehouse," "The Scarlet Shoes," "Katie the Kid," "Bluebell." (London Chinatown.)

BURT, MAXWELL STRUTHERS. *John O'May.* Scribner, 1918. "A Cup of Tea," "The Water-Hole."

———. *Chance Encounters.* Scribner, 1921.

BUTLER, ELLIS PARKER. *Pigs is Pigs.* Doubleday, 1906. (Humor.)

CABELL, JAMES. *The Certain Hour.* McBride, 1921.

———. *Chivalry.* McBride, 1921.

———. *The Line of Love.* McBride, 1921.

CABLE, GEORGE. *Old Creole Days.* Scribner, 1879. (Louisiana.)

———. *"Possom Jone'" and Père Raphael.* Scribner, 1907. Title stories. (Louisiana.)

CANFIELD, DOROTHY. *Hillsboro People.* Holt, 1915. "The Bedquilt." (New England.)

———. *The Real Motive.* Holt, 1916. "A Sleep and a Forgetting," "An Academic Question," "From Across the Hall," "A Thread without a Knot." (New England.)

CATHER, WILLA. *Youth and the Bright Medusa.* Knopf, 1920. "Coming, Aphrodite."

CHAMBERS, ROBERT W. *The Adventures of a Modest Man.* Appleton, 1911.

———. *The Better Man.* Appleton, 1916. "The Progress of Janet," "Owl's Head."

———. *Blue Bird Weather.* Appleton, 1912. Title story.

———. *The King in Yellow.* Harper, 1902. "The Mask," "Demoiselle D'Ys." (Fantasy.)

———. *The Maker of Moons.* Putnam, 1896. Title story. (Fantasy.)

———. *Special Messenger.* Appleton, 1909. "An Air Line." (Civil War.)

———. *The Tree of Heaven.* Appleton, 1907. "The Carpet of Belshazzar, "The Tree of Dreams," "The Golden Pool." (Fantasy.)

CHEKHOV, ANTON. *The Bishop.* Macmillan, 1919. (Russia.)

———. *The Chorus Girl.* Macmillan, 1920. Title story.

———. *The Darling.* Macmillan, 1916. Title story.

———. *The Duel.* Macmillan, 1916.

———. *The Horse-Stealers.* Macmillan, 1921.

———. *The Lady with the Dog.* Macmillan, 1917. "The Black Monk."

———. *Nine Humorous Tales.* Stratford Co. (Boston), 1918. "A Work of Art," "Vengeance," "The Scandal-Monger."

———. *The Party.* Macmillan, 1917. "The Kiss."

———. *The Schoolmaster.* Macmillan, 1921.

———. *The Schoolmistress.* Macmillan, 1920. "The Bet."

———. *The Wife.* Macmillan, 1918.

———. *The Witch.* Macmillan, 1918.

CHESTERTON, GILBERT K. *The Innocence of Father Brown.* Lane, 1911. "The Blue Cross," "The Secret Garden." (Detective.)

———. *The Wisdom of Father Brown,* 1914. (Detective.)

CHILD, RICHARD WASHBURN. *The Man in the Shadow.* Macmillan, 1911. Title story.

———. *The Velvet Black.* Dutton, 1921. Title story, "Identified," "The Cracking Knee," "Fibre," "Foxed." (Mystery.)

COBB, IRVIN. *Back Home.* Doran, 1912.

———. *From Place to Place.* Doran, 1920. "The Gallowsmith," "The Thunders of Silence," "Boys Will Be Boys," "The Luck Piece," "Quality Folks," "When August the Second Was April the First," "The Bull Called Emily."

———. *The Escape of Mr. Trimm.* Doran, 1913. "The Belled Buzzard," "An Occurrence up a Side Street," "Fishhead."

———. *The Life of the Party.* Doran, 1919. (Humor.)

———. *Local Color.* Doran, 1916. Title story, "The Smart Aleck," "Blacker than Sin," "The Great Auk."

———. *Old Judge Priest.* Doran, 1916. "The Lord Provides," "Sergeant Bagby's Feet," "Double-Barreled Justice."

———. *Those Times and These.* Doran, 1917. "The Family Tree," "Cinnamon Seed and Sandy Bottom."

COHEN, OCTAVUS ROY. *Come Seven.* Dodd, 1920. "The Fight that Failed." (Negro.)

———. *Highly Colored.* Dodd, 1921.

———. *Polished Ebony.* Dodd, 1919. "Tempus Fugits," "Not Wisely but too Well."

COLCORD, LINCOLN. *The Game of Life and Death.* Macmillan, 1914. Title story. (Sea.)

COMER, CORNELIA. *The Preliminaries.* Houghton, 1912. Title story.

CONNOLLY, JAMES B. *Deep Sea's Toll.* Scribner, 1907. "The Truth of the *Oliver Cromwell.*"

———. *Head Winds.* Scribner, 1916. "The Trawler."

———. *Open Water.* Scribner, 1910.

———. *Running Free.* Scribner, 1917. "Breath o' Dawn," "Peter Stops Ashore."

———. *Tide Rips.* Scribner, 1921.

CONRAD, JOSEPH. *A Set of Six.* Doubleday, 1914. "The Brute."

———. *Tales of Unrest.* Doubleday, 1916.

———. *Twixt Land and Sea.* Doubleday, 1914.

———. *Within the Tides.* Doubleday, 1916. "The Inn of the Two Witches."

———. *Youth.* Doubleday, 1903. "The Heart of Darkness."

COPPÉE, FRANÇOIS. *Tales from Coppée.* Harper, 1891. "The Captain's Vices," "The Substitute." (French.)

CRABB, ARTHUR. *Samuel Lyle, Criminologist.* Century, 1920. "Among Gentlemen," "A Story Apropos," "Juror No. 5." (Detective.)

'CRADDOCK, CHARLES EGBERT' (Mrs. Murfree). *In the Tennessee Mountains.* Houghton, 1884. "Drifting down Lone Creek," "The Dancin' Party at Harrison's Cove." (Tennessee.)

———. *The Mystery of Witch-Face Mountain.* Houghton, 1895. "Taking the Blue Ribbon at the County Fair." (Tennessee.)

CRANE, STEPHEN. *Men, Women, and Boats.* Boni, 1921.

CRAWFORD, F. MARION. *Wandering Ghosts.* Macmillan, 1911. "The Upper Berth," "The Dead Smile," "The Screaming Skull." (Fantasy.)

CUTTING, MARY S. *Just for Two.* Doubleday, 1909. "The Enchantment," "The Path to Spain."

———. *Little Stories of Courtship.* Doubleday, 1905. "Paying Guests," "In Regard to Josephine," "The Perfect Tale."

———. *Little Stories of Married Life.* Doubleday,

———. *More Stories of Married Life.* Doubleday, 1906.

———. *Refractory Husbands.* Doubleday, 1913. "Father's Little Joke," "Marrying Willow," "The Blossoming Rod."

———. *Some of Us Are Married.* Doubleday, 1920.

DAUDET, ALPHONSE. *Letters from My Mill.* Little, 1900. "The Pope's Mule," "The Death of the Dauphin." (French.)

———. *Monday Tales.* Little, 1900. "The Last Class," "The Siege of Berlin." (French.)

DAVIS, RICHARD HARDING. *Gallegher and Other Stories.* Scribner, 1891. Title story and "The Other Woman."

———. *The Lost Road.* Scribner, 1913.

———. *The Man Who Could Not Lose.* Scribner, 1911. "The Consul."

———. *Once Upon a Time.* Scribner, 1910. "The Charmed Life."

———. *Ranson's Folly.* Scribner, 1902. "The Bar Sinister," "The Derelict."

———. *The Red Cross Girl.* Scribner, 1912. Title story and "The Grand Cross of the Crescent."

———. *Somewhere in France.* Scribner, 1915. Title story.

———. *Van Bibber and Others.* Harper, 1892. "The Unfinished Story."

DELAND, MARGARET. *Around Old Chester.* Harper, 1915. "The Third Volume," "Clara's Perseus," "The Harvest of Fear."

———. *Dr. Lavendar's People.* Harper, 1903. (Pennsylvania.)

———. *Old Chester Tales.* Harper, 1898. "Good for the Soul." (Pennsylvania.)

DELL, ETHEL. *The Tidal Wave.* Putnam, 1920.

DE SÉLINCOURT, HUGH. *Nine Tales.* Dodd, 1916.

DOYLE, A. CONAN. *Adventures of Brigadier Gerard.* Harper, 1903. "How the Brigadier Slew the Fox." (Humor.)

———. *Exploits of Brigadier Gerard.* Appleton, 1902. "How the Brigadier Came to the House of Gloom." (Humor.)

DOYLE, A. CONAN. *Adventures of Sherlock Holmes.* Harper, 1892.

"A Scandal in Bohemia," "The Speckled Band," "The Red-Headed League." (Detective.)

———. *Danger!* Doran, 1919. Title story, "How It Happened," "The Horror of the Heights." (Fantasy.)

———. *His Last Bow.* Doran, 1917. Title story, "The Dying Detective." (Detective.)

———. *Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes.* Harper, 1893. "Silver Blaze," "The Final Problem." (Detective.)

———. *The Return of Sherlock Holmes.* Doubleday, 1905. "The Northwood Builder," "The Dancing Men." (Detective.)

DREISER, THEODORE. *Free and Other Stories.* Boni, 1918.

DUNCAN, NORMAN. *Battles Royal Down North.* Fleming H. Revell & Co. (New York), 1918. (Labrador.)

———. *Harbor Tales Down North.* Revell, 1918. (Labrador.)

DUNSANY, LORD. *The Book of Wonder.* Boni, 1918. (Fantasy.)

———. *A Dreamer's Tales.* Boni, 1920.

DWIGHT, H. G. *The Emperor of Elam.* Doubleday, 1920. Title story and "Henrietta Stackpole *Redivivа*." (Orient.)

———. *Stamboul Nights.* Doubleday, 1916. "In the Pasha's Garden." (Orient.)

ESENWEIN, J. BERG (Editor). *Short Story Masterpieces.* In Four Volumes. I and II French; III and IV Russian. Home Correspondence School (Springfield, Mass.).

EVANS, CARADOC. *My Neighbors.* Harcourt, 1920. (Wales.)

———. *My People.* Boni, 1918. "Greater than Love." (Wales.)

EVARTS, HAL G. *The Bald Face and Other Animal Stories.* Knopf, 1921. (Animals.)

FERBER, EDNA. *Buttered Side Down.* Stokes, 1912. "Where the Car Turns at 18th."

———. *Cheerful—By Request.* Doubleday, 1918. "The Gay Old Dog," "The Woman Who Tried to be Good," "The Eldest," "Sophy as She Might Have Been."

———. *Emma McCheesney & Co.* Stokes, 1915. "Sisters under their Skins."

———. *Half Portions.* Doubleday, 1920. "The Maternal Feminine," April 25th, as Usual," "Old Lady Mandle."

———. *Personality Plus.* Stokes, 1914. Title story.

———. *Roast Beef Medium.* Stokes, 1913. "Catching up with Christmas."

FITZGERALD, F. SCOTT. *Flappers and Philosophers.* Scribner, 1920. "The Off-Shore Pirate," "Head and Shoulders."

FOOTE, JOHN TAINTOR. *The Lucky Seven.* Appleton, 1918. "The Bolters," "Opus 43, No. 6," "Goldie May and the Faithful Servant."

FOX, JOHN. *Christmas Eve on Lonesome.* Scribner, 1904. (Kentucky.)

———. *A Cumberland Vendetta.* Scribner, 1896. "A Mountain Europa." (Kentucky.)

———. *Hell fer Sartain."* Scribner, 1897. (Kentucky.)

———. *In Happy Valley.* Scribner, 1917. "The Courtship of Allaphair," "The Lord's Own Level," "The Goddess of Happy Valley," "The Battle Prayer of Parson Small." (Kentucky.)

FRANCE, ANATOLE. *Mother of Pearl.* Lane, 1917. "The Procurator of Judaea," *Our Lady's Juggler.* (French.)

FREEMAN, MARY E. WILKINS. *The Copy Cat.* Harper, 1914. Title story. (New England.)

———. *Edgewater People.* Harper, 1918. "The Ring with the Green Stone." (New England.)

———. *The Fair Lavinia.* Harper, 1907. "Amarina's Roses," "Willow-Ware." (New England.)

———. *A Humble Romance.* Harper, 1887. Title story. (New England.)

———. *The Love of Parson Lord.* Harper, 1900. Title story. (New England.)

———. *A New England Nun.* Harper, 1901. Title story, "The Village Singer," "The Revolt of Mother," "The Scent of the Roses." (New England.)

———. *Silence.* Harper, 1898. "Evalina's Garden." (New England.)

———. *The Winning Lady.* Harper, 1909. "The Joy of Youth." (New England.)

———. *Young Lucretia.* Harper, 1892. (New England.)

FULLER, ANNA. *Pratt Portraits.* Putnam, 1897. "A Valentine," "Well Matched." (New England.)

———. *Later Pratt Portraits.* Putnam, 1911. "Old Lady Pratt's Spectacles." (New England.)

GALE, ZONA. *Friendship Village Love Stories.* Macmillan, 1909. "Different."

GALSWORTHY, JOHN. *Five Tales.* Scribner, 1918. (England.)

———. *The Inn of Tranquillity.* Scribner, 1913. "Quality." (England.)

GARLAND, HAMLIN. *Main Travelled Roads.* Harper, 1899. "Up the Coolly," "A Branch Road," "Under the Lion's Paw," "Among the Corn Rows." (Middle West.)

———. *Other Main Travelled Roads.* Harper, 1910. "William Bacon's Man," "Lucretia Burns," "A Stop-Over at Tyre." (Middle West.)

———. *Prairie Folks.* Harper, 1899. "Black Ephram." (Middle West.)

———. *The Spirit of Sweetwater.* Doubleday, 1898. Title story. (Far West.)

———. *They of the High Trails.* Harper, 1916. "The Cow-Boss," "The Remittance Man." (Far West.)

GARSHIN, W. M. *The Signal.* Knopf, 1915. "Four Days." (Russia.)

GAUTIER, THÉOPHILE. *Works.* Little, 1902. "The Mummy's Foot" (Volume IV). (French.)

GELZER, JAY. *The Street of a Thousand Delights.* McBride, 1921. "The Chinese Lily," "The Blue Eyes of Wang Hai," "In the Street of a Thousand Delights," "Mei-Li the Beautiful," "The Gold Lacquered Box," "A Prince of China." "The Gorgeous Jest." (Chinese.)

GEROULD, KATHERINE. *The Great Tradition.* Scribner, 1915. "The Dominant Strain," "Miracle."

———. *Vain Oblations.* Scribner, 1914. Title story, "The Tortoise," "On the Stair-Case."

GILLMORE, INEZ. *Phoebe and Ernest.* Holt, 1910. (Youth.)

———. *Phoebe, Ernest, and Cupid.* Holt, 1913. (Youth.)

———. *The Happy Years.* Holt, 1919. (Youth.)

GLASS, MONTAGUE. *Abe and Mawruss.* Doubleday, 1911. (Humor.)

———. *Object: Matrimony.* Doubleday, 1912. (Humor.)

———. *Potash and Perlmutter.* Doubleday, 1911. (Humor.)

GORDON, ARMSTEAD. *Ommirandy.* Scribner, 1917. "The Silent Infare." (Negro.)

'GORKY, MAXIM.' *Creatures that Once Were Men.* Boni. "Twenty-Six Men and a Girl." (Russia.)

———. *Stories of the Steppes.* Stratford Company (Boston), 1918. (Russia.)

———. *Tales from Gorky.* Funk & Wagnalls (New York), 1902. "Twenty-Six Men and a Girl" (Russia.)

GREEN, ANNA KATHERINE. *Room No. 3.* Dodd, 1913. Title story and "Midnight in Beauchamps Row." (Detective.)

GREEN, HELEN (Van Campen). *The Actor's Boarding-House.* Nevada Publishing Co. (New York), 1906. "Emma, the Slavey, Makes Good in Vaudeville." (Stage.)

GREENE, FREDERICK S. (Editor). *The Grim 13.* Dodd, 1917. "Rain," by Dana Burnet; "Old Fags," by Stacy Aumonier; "The Black Pool," by Frederick S. Greene. (Tragedy.)

HALE, EDWARD EVERETT. *The Man Without a Country.* Little, 1898. Title story.

HALÈVY, LUDOVIC. *The Abbé Constantin.* Burt (New York), 1895. Title story. (French.)

———. *Parisian Points of View.* Harper, 1894. "The Insurgent."

HARDY, THOMAS. *A Changed Man.* Harper, 1913. (England.)

———. *Life's Little Ironies.* Harper, 1894. "On the Western Circuit." (England.)

———. *Wessex Tales.* Harper, 1888. "The Three Strangers," "The Withered Arm." (England.)

HARRIS, JOEL CHANDLER. *Uncle Remus, His Songs and Sayings.* Appleton, 1911. "The Tar Baby." (Georgia.)

HARRIS, KENNETH. *Meet Mr. Stegg.* Holt, 1921. (Far West.)

HARTE, BRET. *The Luck of Roaring Camp.* Houghton, 1886. Title story, "The Outcasts of Poker Flat," "Tennessee's Partner." (Far West.)

HAWTHORNE, NATHANIEL. *Mosses from an Old Manse.* Houghton, various editions. "The Birthmark," "Feathertop," "Rappaccini's Daughter." (Fantasy.)

———. *Twice Told Tales.* Houghton, various editions. "Dr. Heidegger's Experiment." "The White Old Maid," "The Great Stone Face," "The Ambitious Guest," "The Grey Champion." (Fantasy.)

HEMENWAY, HETTY. *Four Days.* Little, 1917. Title story. (World War.)

HENRY, O. *Cabbages and Kings.* Doubleday, 1904. "The Phonograph and the Graft."

———. *The Four Million.* Doubleday, 1909. "The Gift of the Magi," "The Love Philtre of Ikey Schoenstein," "An Unfinished Story," "The Furnished Room."

———. *The Gentle Grafter.* Doubleday, 1908. "Jeff Peters as a Personal Magnet."

———. *The Heart of the West.* Doubleday, 1907. "Hearts and Crosses," "The Handbook of Hymen," "Pimienta Pancakes," "A Call Loan," "The Reformation of Calliope," "The Indian Summer of Dry Valley Johnson."

———. *Options.* Harper, 1909. "The Hiding of Black Bill," "Thimble, Thimble."

———. *Roads of Destiny.* Doubleday, 1909. Title story, "Guardian of the Accolade," "Next to Reading Matter," "A Double-Dyed Deceiver," "A Retrieved Reformation," "A Departmental Case," "The Lonesome Road."

———. *Rolling Stones.* Doubleday, 1912. "A Fog in Santone."

———. *Sixes and Sevens.* Doubleday, 1911. "Let Me Feel Your Pulse," "October and June."

———. *Strictly Business.* Doubleday, 1910. "A Municipal Report."

———. *The Trimmed Lamp.* Doubleday, 1910. "A Harlem Tragedy."

———. *The Voice of the City.* Doubleday, 1908. "While the Auto Waits."

———. *Waifs and Strays.* Doubleday, 1919.

———. *Whirligigs.* Doubleday, 1910. "The Ransome of Red Chief," "The Whirligig of Life."

HERGESHEIMER, JOSEPH. *Gold and Iron.* Knopf, 1918.

———. *The Happy End.* Knopf, 1919. "Lonely Valleys," "The Flower of Spain," "Tol'able David."

HERRICK, ROBERT. *The Master of the Inn.* Scribner, 1908. Title story.

HEWLETT, MAURICE. *Little Novels of Italy.* Macmillan, 1899. "Madonna of the Peach-Tree." (Italy.)

———. *New Canterbury Tales.* Macmillan, 1901.

HICHENS, ROBERT. *Bye-Ways.* Dodd, 1897. "The Charmer of Snakes," "A Tribute of Souls," "An Echo in Egypt." (Egypt.)

———. *Snake-Bite.* Doran, 1920. Title story and "The Nomad." (Egypt.)

HOPE, ANTHONY. *Comedies of Courtship.* Scribner, 1895. "The Philosopher in the Apple Orchard." (England.)

———. *The Dolly Dialogues.* Holt, 1901. "The House Opposite." (England.)

HOWELLS, WILLIAM DEAN (Editor). *The Great American Stories.* Boni, 1920.

HUGHES, RUPERT. *In a Little Town.* Harper, 1917. "The Old Folks at Home," "And this is Marriage." (Middle West.)

HUGHES, RUPERT. *Long Ever Ago.* Harper, 1918.

———. *Momma and Other Unimportant People.* Harper, 1920.

HURST, FANNIE. *Every Soul Hath Its Song.* Harper, 1916. "Sea Gullibles," "Rolling Stock," "The Nth Commandment," "T.B."

———. *Gaslight Sonatas.* Harper, 1918. "Bitter-Sweet," "Ice Water, Pl——," "Hers Not to Reason Why."

———. *Humoresque.* Harper, 1919. Title story and "White Goods."

———. *Just Around the Corner.* Harper, 1914. "Power and Horsepower," "Other People's Shoes."

JACOBS, W. W. *Captains All.* Scribner, 1905. "The Boatswain's Mate," "Bob's Redemption." (Humor.)

———. *Deep Waters.* Scribner, 1919. (Humor.)

———. *The Lady of the Barge.* Dodd, 1902. Title story and "The Monkey's Paw." (Humor.)

———. *Many Cargoes.* Stokes, 1897. "A Black Affair." (Humor.)

———. *More Cargoes.* Stokes, 1898. (Humor.)

———. *Night Watches.* Scribner, 1914. "The Weaker Vessel," "His Other Self." (Humor.)

———. *Odd Craft.* Scribner, 1903. "The Money Box," "Blundell's Improvement," "The Third String." (Humor.)

———. *Sailor's Knots.* Scribner, 1909. "Self Help," "The Toll-House," "Prize Money." (Humor.)

———. *The Ship's Company.* Scribner, 1911. "Fine Feathers," "Friends in Need," "Fairy Gold," "The Bequest." (Humor.)

JAMES, HENRY. *The Two Magics.* Macmillan, 1898. "The Turn of The Screw."

———. *The Real Thing.* Macmillan, 1893. Title story.

JENKINS, HERBERT. *Malcolm Sage, Detective.* Doran, 1921. "The Glyston Slander," "The Missing Heavyweight." (Detective.)

JESSUP, ALEXANDER (Editor). *Little French Masterpieces.* In six volumes. I Mérimée; II Flaubert; III Gautier; IV Balzac; V Daudet; VI De Maupassant. Putnam, 1903. (French.)

JEWETT, SARAH O. *The Life of Nancy.* Houghton, 1895. "Fame's Little Day." (New England.)

———. *The Queen's Twin.* Houghton, 1899. Title story. (New England.)

———. *Tales of New England.* Houghton, 1879. "Marsh Rosemary," "A White Heron." (New England.)

JOHNSON, ARTHUR. *Under the Rose.* Harper, 1920.

JOHNSON, OWEN. *Murder in Any Degree.* Century, 1913.

JORDAN, ELIZABETH. *Lovers' Knots.* Harper, 1916.

KAHLER, HUGH MCNAIR. *Babel.* Putnam, 1921. Title story, "The Obligee," "Wild Carrot," "The Buckpasser."

KELLAND, CLARENCE BUDINGTON. *Scattergood Baines.* Harper, 1921.

KELLEY, MYRA. *Little Aliens.* Scribner, 1910. (Youth.)

———. *New Faces.* Dillingham (New York City), 1910. "The Play's the Thing." (Youth.)

KIPLING, RUDYARD. *Actions and Reactions.* Doubleday, 1909. "An Habitation Enforced," "With the Night Mail." (England.)

———. *The Day's Work.* Doubleday, 1898. "The Brushwood Boy."

———. *A Diversity of Creatures.* Doubleday, 1917.

———. *Life's Handicap.* Doubleday, 1899. "Without Benefit of Clergy," "The Man Who Was," "The Courting of Dinah Shadd," "The Mark of the Beast." (India.)

———. *Many Inventions.* Doubleday, 1901.

———. *Mine Own People.* Doubleday, 1891. "The Incarnation of Krishna Mulvaney." (India.)

———. *Plain Tales from the Hills.* Doubleday, 1899. "The Conversion of Aurelian McGoggin," "A Bank Fraud," "The Gate of a Hundred Sorrows." (India.)

———. *Soldier Stories.* Doubleday, 1909. (India.)

———. *Soldiers Three.* Doubleday, 1895. "The God from the Machine," "In the Matter of a Private," "Poor Dear Mama." (India.)

———. *Stalky and Company.* Doubleday, 1899. (Youth.)

———. *Traffics and Discoveries.* Doubleday, 1904. "They."

———. *Under the Deodars.* Doubleday, 1895. "A Second-Rate Woman," "The Man Who Would Be King," "Baa, Baa, Black Sheep." (India.)

———. *Selected Stories from.* Edited by William Lyon Phelps. Doubleday, 1921.

LAGERLÖF, SELMA. *The Girl from Marsh Croft.* Doubleday, 1910. Title story. (Sweden.)

———. *Invisible Links.* Doubleday, 1912. (Sweden.)

LA MOTTE, ELLEN N. *Civilization: Tales of the Orient.* Doran. 1919. (Orient.)

LAWRENCE, D. H. *The Prussian Officer.* Huebsch, 1916.

LEACOCK, STEPHEN. *Nonsense Novels.* Lane, 1917. "A Hero in Homespun." (Humor.)

LEFÈVRE, EDWIN. *Wall Street Stories.* Harper, 1901. "A Woman and Her Bonds. (New York.)

LEVEL, MAURICE. *Tales of Mystery and Horror.* McBride, 1920. (Mystery.)

LEWIS, ALFRED HENRY. *Faro Nell and Her Friends:* Wolfville Stories. M. A. Donahue (Chicago), 1913. (Far West.)

———. *Wolfville.* Stokes, 1897. (Far West.)

———. *Wolfville Days.* Stokes, 1902. (Far West.)

———. *Wolfville Folks.* Appleton, 1908. (Far West.)

———. *Wolfville Nights.* Stokes, 1902. (Far West.)

LINCOLN, JOSEPH. *Cape Cod Folks (Old Home House).* Appleton, 1907. "Two Pairs of Shoes." (New England.)

LOCKE, WILLIAM J. *Far Away Stories.* Lane, 1919.

———. *The Joyous Adventures of Aristide Pujol.* Lane, 1912. (Humor.)

LONDON, JACK. *Children of the Frost.* Macmillan, 1902. "The Law of Life." (Alaska.)

———. *The Faith of Men.* Macmillan, 1904. Title story. (Alaska.)

———. *Lost Face.* Macmillan, 1910. Title story and "To Build a Fire." (Alaska.)

———. *The Love of Life.* Macmillan, 1906. Title story and "A Day's Lodging." (Alaska.)

———. *The Night-Born.* Century, 1913. "The Madness of John Harned," "Under the Deck Awning." (Alaska.)

———. *On the Makaloa Mat.* Macmillan, 1919. Title story, "When Alice Told Her Soul," "The Kanaka Surf." (South Seas.)

———. *The Red One.* Macmillan, 1918. Title story and "Like Argus of the Ancient Times." (South Seas.)

——— *A Son of the Sun.* Doubleday, 1912. Title story, "The Proud Goat of Aloysius Pankburn," "A Little Account with Swithin Hall." (South Seas.)

———. *A Son of the Wolf.* Houghton, 1900. "White Silence." (Alaska.)

———. *South Sea Tales.* Macmillan, 1911. "Mauki," The Heathen." (South Seas.)

———. *The Strength of the Strong.* Macmillan, 1914. "South of the Slot," "The Unparalleled Invasion," "Samuel."

———. *The Turtles of Tasman.* Macmillan, 1916. Title story.

———. *When God Laughs.* Macmillan, 1911. Title story and "Just Meat."

LONG, JOHN LUTHER. *Madame Butterfly.* Century, 1897. Title story. (Japan.)

MANSFIELD, KATHERINE. *Bliss, and Other Stories.* Knopf, 1921.

MARQUIS, DON. *Carter, and Other People.* Appleton, 1921.

MARTIN, GEORGE MADDEN. *Children of the Mist.* Appleton, 1920. (Negro.)

———. *Emmy Lou, Her Book and Heart.* Doubleday, 1902. "The Right Promethean Fire." (Youth.)

MARTIN, HELEN R. *The Betrothal of Elypholate.* Century, 1907. Title story, "The Conversion of Elviny," "Ellie's Furnishings," "Mrs. Holzapple's Convictions." (Pennsylvania Dutch.)

MASSON, THOMAS L. (Editor). *Short Stories from 'Life.'* Doubleday, 1916. "Thicker than Water," by R. H. Barbour and G. R. Osbourne; "Business and Ethics," by R. Ingalls; "The Answer," by Harry S. Edwards.

MATTHEWS, BRANDER. *Vignettes of Manhattan: Outlines in Local Color.* Scribner, 1894. "In Search of Local Color." (New York.)

———. *Vistas of New York.* Harper, 1912. "In a Hansom." (New York.)

MAUPASSANT, GUY DE. *Love, and Other Stories.* Boni, 1919. "The Wolf," "Moonlight," "A Vendetta," "Mother Sauvage," "Fear," "Happiness." (French.)

———. *Mademoiselle Fifi, and Other Stories.* Boni, 1919. "The Piece of String," "The Horla." (French.)

———. *The Odd Number.* Harper, 1889. "The Coward," "La Mère Sauvage," "The Necklace," "In the Moonlight," "The Piece of

String," "Happiness," "The Wolf," "The Confession." (French.)

———. *The Second Odd Number.* Harper, 1915. "Two Friends," "Fear." (French.)

———. *Yvette, and Ten Other Stories.* Knopf, 1919. (French.)

Means, E. K., Putnam, 1918. (Negro.)

———. *Further E. K. Means.* Putnam, 1921. (Negro.)

———. *More E. K. Means.* Putnam, 1919. (Negro.)

MÉRIMÉE, PROSPER. *Works.* Frank Holby, 1906. "Mateo Falcone" (Volume III), "The Venus of Ille" (Volume IV). (French.)

MERRICK, LEONARD. *A Chair on the Boulevard.* Dutton, 1921. "The Tragedy of a Comic Song." (England.)

———. *The Man Who Understood Women.* Dutton, 1919.

———. *While Paris Laughed.* Dutton, 1918.

MITCHELL, S. WEIR. *The Guillotine Club.* Century, 1910.

MONTAGUE, MARGARET PRESCOTT. *England to America.* Doubleday, 1920. Title story. (World War.)

———. *Uncle Sam of Freedom Ridge.* Doubleday, 1920. Title story. (World War.)

MOORE, GEORGE. *The Untilled Field.* J. B. Lippincott Company (Philadelphia). 1903.

MORLEY, CHRISTOPHER. *Tales from a Roll-Top Desk.* Doubleday, 1921. "Advice to the Lovelorn," "The Curious Case of Kenelm Digby," "The Commutation Chophouse," "The Pert Little Hat." (Humor.)

MORRIS, GOUVERNEUR. *The Footprint.* Scribner, 1908. Title story, "The Execution," "Captain England," "Simon L'Ouvrier."

———. *The Incandescent Lily.* Scribner, 1914. Title story, "You Can't Get Away With It," "Legay Pelham's Protégé."

———. *It.* Scribner, 1912. Title story, "The Claws of the Tiger," "Back There in the Grass."

———. *The Spread Eagle.* Scribner, 1910. Title story, "Targets," "The Despoiler," "One More Martyr," "The MacTavish."

MORRISON, ARTHUR. *Tales of Mean Street.* Boni, 1921. "On the Stairs." (England.)

MUNDY, TALBOT. *Told in the East.* Bobbs-Merrill, 1920. (India.)

NEVINSON, H. W. *Original Sinners.* Huebsch, 1921.

NORRIS, FRANK. *A Deal in Wheat.* Doubleday, 1903. Title story and "A Memorandum of Sudden Death." (West.)

———. *The Third Circle.* Lane, 1909. Title story.

NORRIS, KATHLEEN. *Poor Dear Margaret Kirby.* Doubleday, 1919.

NOYES, ALFRED. *Walking Shadows.* Stokes, 1918. "The Creative Impulse," "Uncle Hyacinth," "May Margaret." (World War.)

OEMLER, MARIE CONWAY. *Where the Young Child Was: And Other Christmas Stories.* Century, 1921.

O'HIGGINS, HARVEY J. *From the Life.* Harper, 1919.

O'BRIEN, EDWARD J. (Editor). *The Best Short Stories of 1915.* Small, 1916. "The Water-Hole," by Maxwell Struthers Burt; "T.B.," by Fannie Hurst; "The Yellow Cat," by Wilbur D. Steele.

———. *The Best Short Stories of 1916.* Small, 1917. "The Great Auk," by Irvin Cobb; "The Cat of the Cane-Brake," by Frederick S. Greene; "Ice Water, Pl——," by Fannie Hurst; "Down on their Knees," by Wilbur D. Steele.

———. *The Best Short Stories of 1917.* Small, 1918. "A Cup of Tea," by Maxwell Struthers Burt; "Laughter," by Charles C. Dobie; "The Gay Old Dog," by Edna Ferber; "The Knight's Move," by Katherine Gerould; "A Jury of her Peers," by Susan Glaspell; "The Bunker Mouse," by Frederick S. Greene; "Ching, Ching, Chinaman," by Wilbur D. Steele.

———. *The Best Short Stories of 1918.* Small, 1919. "The Open Window," by Charles C. Dobie; "The Willow Walk," by Sinclair Lewis; "The Dark Hour," by Wilbur D. Steele.

———. *The Best Short Stories of 1919.* Small, 1920. "The Kitchen Gods," by G. F. Alsop; "The Wrists on the Door," by Horace Fish; "The Fat of the Land," by Anzia Yezierska.

———. *The Best Short Stories of 1920.* Small, 1921. "Ghitza," by Konrad Bercovici; "Amazement," by Stephen French Whitman.

———. *The Best Short Stories of 1921.* Small, 1922. "Fanutza," by Konrad Bercovici.

———. *Great Modern English Stories.* Boni, 1919. "Red and White," by Roland Pertwee.

O'BRIEN, FITZ. *The Diamond Lens.* Scribner, 1885. Title story and "What Was It? A Mystery." (Fantasy.)

OSBOURNE, LLOYD. *Wild Justice.* Appleton, 1921. (South Seas.)

PAGE, THOMAS NELSON. *In Ole Virginia.* Scribner, 1896. "Marse Chan," "Meh Lady." (Virginia.)

———. *The Land of the Spirit.* Scribner, 1913. "The Stranger's Pew," "The Outcast." (Fantasy.)

PAIN, BARRY. *Collected Tales: Volume One.* Stokes, 1916. "Exchange," "Wilmay," "The Glass of Supreme Moments," "Sparkling Burgundy."

———. *One Kind and Another.* Stokes, 1914.

———. *Stories in Grey.* Stokes, 1914. "Rose Red," "Linda."

———. *Stories Without Tears.* Stokes, 1914.

PARKER, GILBERT. *Cumner's Son.* Harper, 1910. Title story, "The High Court of Budgery-Gar," "Dibbs, R. N.," "The Derelict."

———. *Donovan Pasha and Some People of Egypt.* Appleton, 1902. "While the Lamp Holds Out," "The Desertion of Mahommed Selim," "At the Mercy of Tiberius." (Egypt.)

———. *Northern Lights.* Harper, 1909. "A Lodging in the Wilderness," "Qu' Appelle?" (Canada.)

———. *Pierre and his People.* Harper, 1898. (Canada.)

PEPLE, EDWARD. *A Night Out.* Moffat, Yard & Co. (New York), 1909. (Humor.)

PERTWEE, ROLAND. *The Old Card.* Boni, 1919. "The Big Chance," "The Eliphalet Touch." "The Last Curtain." (Stage.)

———. *The Transactions of Lord Louis Lewis.* Dodd, 1916. "The Cellini Salt-Cellar," "The Seven Khang-he Vases," "The 13th Chair," "Egg-Shell." (England.)

POE, EDGAR ALLAN. *Works.* "The Gold-Bug," "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," "The Black Cat," "The Cask of Amontillado," "The Pit and the Pendulum," "Ligeia," "The Masque of the Red Death," "The Fall of the House of Usher," "The Purloined Letter," "Berenice," "The Tell-Tale Heart," "Thou Art the Man."

POST, MELVILLE DAVISSON. *The Man of Last Resort.* Putnam, 1897.

———. *The Mystery at the Blue Villa.* Appleton, 1919. Title story, "The Stolen Life," "The Laughter of Allah," "Lord Winston's Adventure," "The Witch of the Lecca." (Detective.)

———. *The Nameless Thing.* Appleton, 1898.

———. *The Sleuth of St. James's Square.* Appleton, 1920. "The Thing on the Hearth," "The Reward," "The Cambered Foot," "The Wrong Man." (Detective.)

———. *The Corrector of Destinies.* Edward J. Clode (New York), 1908. "Madame Versäy," "An Adventure of St. Valentine's Night," "The Intriguer." (Detective and Mystery.)

———. *The Strange Schemes of Randolph Mason.* Putnam, 1896. (Detective.)

———. *Uncle Abner.* Appleton, 1918. "The Doomdorf Mystery," "An Act of God," "The Straw Man," "The Adopted Daughter." (Detective.)

Prize Stories of 1919: O. Henry Memorial Award. Doubleday, 1920. "They Grind Exceeding Small," by Ben Ames Williams; "Five Thousand Dollars Reward," by Melville D. Post; "Humoresque," by Fannie Hurst; "The Kitchen Gods," by G. F. Alsop; "April 25th, As Usual," by Edna Ferber.

———. *Prize Stories of 1920: O. Henry Memorial Award.* Doubleday, 1921. "Slow Poison," by Alice Duer Miller; "Professor

Todd's Used Car," by L. H. Robbins; "Footfalls," by Wilbur D. Steele; "The Last Room of All," by Stephen French Whitman.

———. *Prize Stories of 1921: O. Henry Memorial Award.* Doubleday, 1922.

PUSHKIN, ALEXANDER. *Prose Tales.* Macmillan, 1894. "The Shot," "The Snow Storm," "The Queen of Spades." (Russian.)

PUTNAM, NINA W. *Believe You Me.* Doran, 1919. (World War.)

REEVE, ARTHUR B. *The Dream Doctor.* Harper. (Detective.)

———. *The Poisoned Pen.* Harper, 1913. (Detective.)

———. *The Silent Bullet.* Harper, 1912. (Detective.)

———. *The Treasure Train.* Harper, 1917. (Detective.)

RHODES, HARRISON. *High Life, and Other Stories.* McBride, 1920.

RICE, ALICE HEGAN. *Miss Mink's Soldier, and Other Stories.* Century, 1918.

RICE, ALICE HEGAN, and RICE, CALE YOUNG. *Turn About Tales.* Century, 1920. "Lowry," by A. H. R., "Under New Moons," by A. H. R.

RINEHART, MARY R. *Affinities, and Other Stories.* Doran, 1920. Title Story, "The Family Friend," "Clara's Little Escapades."

———. *Bab, Sub-Deb.* Doran, 1917. (Youth.)

———. *Love Stories.* Doran, 1919. "Twenty-Two," "Jane," "The Miracle," "Are We Downhearted? No!"

———. *Twenty-Three and a Half Hours' Leave.* Doran, 1919. Title story. (Humor.)

RUSSELL, JOHN. *Where the Pavement Ends* (issued in 1919 under the title of *The Red Mark*). Knopf, 1921. "The Red Mark," "The Practicing of Christopher," "The Lost God," "East of Eastward," "The Fourth Man," "The Price of the Head." (South Seas.)

SCHNITTKIND, HENRY S. (Editor). *The Best College Stories.* Stratford Company (Boston), 1918.

SEDGWICK, ANNE DOUGLAS. *Christmas Roses.* Houghton, 1920. (World War.)

SELZER, THOMAS (Editor). *Best Russian Short Stories.* Boni, 1917. (Russia.)

SHORE, VIOLA BROTHERS. *The Heritage, and Other Stories.* Doran, 1921. Title story, "Mary Mary," "We Can't Afford It," "Matzoths Cast Upon the Waters," "O Tempora! O Mawruss!" (Jewish.)

SHUTE, HENRY. *The Misadventures of Three Good Boys.* Houghton, 1914. (Youth.)

SMITH, F. HOPKINSON. *The Under Dog.* Scribner, 1903. "Plain Fin, Paper Hanger," "The Crime of Samanthy North," "Bud Tilden, Mail Thief," "Eleven Months and Ten Days."

———. *The Veiled Lady.* Scribner, 1907. "The Veiled Lady of Stamboul."

———. *Colonel Carter of Cartersville.* Houghton, 1891. Title story.

SMITH, GORDON ARTHUR. *The Pagan.* Scribner, 1920. Title story, "Feet of Gold," "Letitia."

SPEARMAN, FRANK. *Held for Orders.* Scribner, 1900. (Railroad.)

STEELE, WILBUR D. *Land's End.* Harper, 1918. Title story, "Down on Their Knees," "The White Horse Winter," "Ked's Hand," "The Woman at Seven Brothers," "A Man's a Fool." (Sea.)

STEVENSON, ROBERT LOUIS. *Island Nights' Entertainments.* Scribner, 1893. "The Bottle Imp." (South Seas.)

———. *The Merry Men.* Scribner, 1904. "Markheim," "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde."

———. *New Arabian Nights.* Scribner, 1906. "A Lodging for the Night," "Sire de Maletroit's Door."

STOCKTON, FRANK. *A Chosen Few.* Scribner, 1895. "The Remarkable Wreck of the *Thomas Hyde.*"

———. *The Lady or the Tiger?* Scribner, 1884. Title story and "The Transferred Ghost."

STRINDBERG, AUGUST. *Married.* Boni, 1917.

STUART, RUTH MCENERY. *Aunt Amity's Silver Wedding.* Title story. (Negro.)

———. *Carlotta's Intended, and Other Stories.* Harper, 1894. (Negro.)

———. *A Golden Wedding, and Other Stories.* Harper, 1893. (Negro.)

———. *Holly and Pizen.* Century, 1899. Title story. (Negro.)

———. *Moriah's Mourning.* Harper, 1898. (Negro.)

———. *Napoleon Jackson.* Century, 1902. (Negro.)

———. *The Second Wooing of Salina Sue.* Harper, 1905. Title story. (Negro.)

SUDERMANN, HERMANN. *The Indian Lily.* Huebsch, 1911. (German.)

TARBELL, IDA M. *He Knew Lincoln.* Doubleday, 1907. Title story.

TARKINGTON, BOOTH. *Monsieur Beaucaire.* Doubleday, 1900. Title story and "The Beautiful Lady."

———. *Penrod.* Doubleday, 1914. "A Quiet Afternoon," "Little Gentleman," "Tar." (Youth.)

———. *Penrod and Sam.* Doubleday, 1920. (Youth.)

———. *Seventeen.* Harper, 1916. (Youth.)

TOLSTOI, LEO. *Twenty-Three Tales.* Oxford Press, 1906. "Where Love Is God Is," "How Much Land Does a Man Need?" (Russia.)

TRAIN, ARTHUR. *By Advice of Counsel.* Scribner, 1921. "Contempt

of Court," "By Advice of Counsel," "'That Sort of Woman'," "Beyond a Reasonable Doubt." (Law.)

———. *Tutt and Mr. Tutt.* Scribner, 1920. "The Human Element," "Mock Hen and Mock Turtle," "Samuel and Delilah," "Wile Versus Guile," "The Hand Is Quicker than the Eye." (Law.)

TURGENEV, IVAN. *The Jew.* Macmillan, 1899. Title story. (Russia.)

"TWAIN, MARK." *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County.* Harper, 1903. Title story. (Humor.)

———. *The Man that Corrupted Hadleyburg.* Harper, 1898. Title story, "A Double-Barreled Detective Story." (Humor.)

VAN DYKE, HENRY. *The Blue Flower.* Scribner, 1902. "The Other Wise Man," "The Lost Word." (Fantasy.)

———. *The Unknown Quantity.* Scribner, 1912. "The Night Call." (Fantasy.)

VAN LOAN, CHARLES E. *Buck Parvin and the Movies.* Doran, 1915. (Movies.)

———. *Fore!* Doran, 1918. "Gentlemen, You Can't Go Through!" (Golf.)

———. *Old Man Curry.* Doran, 1917. (Race Track.)

———. *Score by Innings.* Doran, 1919. "The Squirrel," "The Bone Doctor," "Excess Baggage," "Nine Assists and Two Errors," "Mister Conley." (Baseball.)

———. *Taking the Count.* Doran, 1919. "Out of His Class," "Scrap Iron," "For the Pictures." (Boxing.)

VAN VECHTEN, CARL (Editor). *Lords of the House Tops: Thirteen Cat Tales.* Knopf, 1921. (Cats.)

WALPOLE, HUGH. *The Thirteen Travellers.* Doran, 1921. (England.)

WEBSTER, HENRY K. *The Painted Scene.* Bobbs-Merrill, 1916. "Brunette Medium," "The Spring of the Year," "Heart of Gold," "How to Appreciate Henry." (Stage.)

WELLS, H. G. *Tales of Time and Space.* Doubleday, 1899. (Fantasy.)

———. *Thirty Strange Stories.* Harper, 1897. "The Cone," "The Strange Orchid," "The Stolen Bacillus," "In the Abyss." (Fantasy.)

———. *Twelve Stories and a Dream.* Scribner, 1905. (Fantasy.)

WHARTON, EDITH. *Crucial Instances.* *Scribner,* 1901. "The Duchess at Prayer."

———. *Ethan Frome.* Scribner, 1911. Title story.

———. *The Greater Inclination.* Scribner, 1899. "Souls Belated."

———. *Tales of Men and Ghosts.* Scribner, 1910.

———. *Xingu.* Scribner, 1916. Title story.

WHITE, STEWART EDWARD. *Arizona Nights.* Doubleday, 1907. (Arizona.)

———. *Blazed Trail Stories.* Doubleday, 1904. "The Riverman," "The Scaler," "The Girl Who Got Rattled," "Billy's Tenderfoot," "The Two Cartridges."

———. *The Killer.* Doubleday, 1920. Title story. (Far West.)

WHITE, WILLIAM ALLEN. *The Court of Boyville.* Macmillan, 1910. "While the Evil Days Come Not." (Youth.)

———. *God's Puppets.* Macmillan, 1916. "A Social Rectangle." (Kansas.)

———. *In Our Town.* Macmillan, 1906. "By the Rod of his Wrath." (Kansas.)

———. *The Real Issue.* Macmillan, 1896. "The King of Boyville," "The Home-Coming of Colonel Hucks." (Kansas.)

WHITLOCK, BRAND. *The Fall Guy.* Bobbs-Merrill, 1912. (Politics.)

———. *The Gold Brick.* Bobbs-Merrill, 1910. (Politics.)

WIDDEMER, MARGARET. *The Boardwalk.* Harcourt, 1920. "Changeling," "Don Andrew's Girl," "The Congregation," "Good Times."

WIGGIN, KATE DOUGLAS. *New Chronicles of Rebecca.* Houghton, 1907. "The Green Isle." (Youth.)

———. *The Old Peabody Pew.* Houghton, 1907. (New England.)

———. *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm.* Houghton, 1903. (Youth.)

———. *Ladies-in-Waiting.* Houghton, 1919.

WILEY, HUGH. *Lady Luck.* Knopf, 1921. (Negro.)

WILEY, HUGH. *Jade.* Knopf, 1921. (Chinatown.)

WILLIAMS, JESSE LYNCH. *The Stolen Story.* Scribner, 1899. Title story.

WISTER, OWEN. *Members of the Family.* Macmillan, 1911. "Happy Teeth," "The Gift Horse." (Far West.)

———. *Red Men and White.* Harper, 1895. (Far West.)

———. *Philosophy Four.* Macmillan, 1903. Title story. (Humor.)

WITWER, H. C. *The Leather Pushers.* Putnams, 1921. (Prize Ring.)

WODEHOUSE, P. G. *Indiscretions of Archie.* Doran, 1921. "A Letter from Father," "Doing Father a Bit of Good," "The Sad Case of Looney Biddle" and "Summer Storms"; "The Growing Boy" and "Washy Steps into the Hall of Fame"; "The Wigmore Venus" and "The Tale of a Grandfather." (Humor.)

WRIGHT, H. W. (Editor). *Great Modern French Stories.* Boni, 1917. "The Mummy's Foot," by Théophile Gautier; "The Venus of Ille," by Prosper Mérimée; "The Attack on the Mill," by Émile Zola; "The Substitute," by François Coppée; "The Procurator of Judea," by Anatole France. (French.)

WYLIE, IDA A. R. *Holy Fire.* Lane, 1920.

ZANGWILL, ISRAEL. *Ghetto Comedies.* Macmillan, 1907. "The Sabbath Question in Sudminister." (Jewish.)

———. *Ghetto Tragedies.* Macmillan, 1899. "They that Walk in Darkness." (Jewish.)

———. *The King of the Schnorrers.* Macmillan, 1894. "The Rose of the Ghetto." (Jewish.)

ZOLA, ÉMILE. *The Attack on the Mill.* Heineman (London), 1913. Title story. (French.)

———. *Stories for Ninon.* Chatto and Windus (London). (French.)

DATE DUE

WITHDRAWN
from
Funderburg Library

THE HECKMAN BINDERY
N. MANCHESTER, INDIANA

808.83 P37
Pence, Raymond Woodb 150101 000
Short stories by present-day a
3 9315 00013279 2
MANCHESTER COLLEGE LIBRARY

808.83
P37
c.2
Pence
Short stories by present day
authors
NOV 21 70 68056
MAR 3 '77 21371
SEP 28 91 39861